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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

WORKERS' EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL

BY

© GARY HANSEN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1988

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled WORKERS' EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL submitted by GARY HANSEN in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

.....
Supervisor

.....

.....

Date: Feb. 29/88.....

To my parents ELVIE AND TRYGVE,

who nurtured in me a humanitarian concern for people.

ABSTRACT

This is a study of workers' schooling experiences. The purpose of it was to attempt to understand workers' schooling and its relationship to their lives today. It was a qualitative study with open ended conversations that allowed the participants and the researcher to discuss and analyze their schooling experiences.

The study consisted of three unionized workers recalling and reflecting on their schooling experiences. The conversations were recorded, transcribed, and given to the interviewee prior to the next conversation. This provided a time for reflection allowing for a deeper analysis of particular experiences in subsequent conversations.

The meaning of workers' schooling emerged in the conversations which recorded their life histories. These conversations were interpreted to inform a Marxist theoretical paradigm. Thus, an understanding of people's experiences together with the scientific theory of Marxism provides one with a guide to action.

This study showed the participants and the researcher developing an unmotivated and often hostile attitude towards schooling which translated into lower than usual academic achievement. This alienation developed from the content and methods used in school. Irrelevant and outdated information that frequently carried an anti-worker bias alienated

students. A lack of concern for individual needs, gender stereotyping, stratification, and resistance were also methods through which students became alienated.

This study concluded that our schools, school curricula, and teaching materials need drastic changes to overcome their shortcomings. It also concluded that changes would likely develop as fundamental change occurs in society. Governmental change would allow the democratic, human education that each participant envisioned for youth while the struggle for this would provide an avenue for short-term reforms beneficial to working class students. The study concluded that social change and change in schooling together would reduce and eventually eliminate the alienation students suffer.

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Finally, to my daughter Krista who missed her dad while he was busy on the machine she couldn't touch. May your patience be rewarded now that I'm finished.

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CHAPTER 1

Focusing on the Question

My Experiences. People make history and are a product of it (Waddington, 1974, pp. 21-22). Ever since humans evolved above the level of animals, our human consciousness has been used by us to shape the world. As we act to shape that world, we shape our consciousness and our consciousness is shaped. A dialectic exists between objective reality and our subjective consciousness --- each developing, changing, and shaping the other, each shaped (1974, p. 41). This interrelationship is the case on both a world/societal level and an individual level. I am a product of the social influences at work in society and the world, my actions, and my parents' influences. These influences motivated my study.

I was born and grew up during what seemes like an eternal period of social turmoil in Canada. These years influenced my parents consciousness who, in turn, influenced me. The 1930s were the years of the Great Depression in which people organized and fought for survival. The 1940s were the years of the war begun by governments to redivide spheres of influence in the world; a war that turned into a people's war against fascism. The 1950s was the period when people's movements, built during the previous decades, were attacked in many countries; World War Two alliances were

thrown overboard and the world entered a dangerous period of military confrontation.

My social consciousness was stimulated by engrossing discussions of these historical, social, economic, and world affairs with my family. These discussions led me to an awareness of the lives of the pioneers who settled our area. I learned about my father coming to Canada in 1914 as a young child and about the family's struggle to survive and get ahead. I learned about the farmers' plight and their attempts to be heard through organizing the Farmers' Unity League and the Farmers' Union. I heard about the farmers' strikes, the Hunger March to Edmonton, and the fight against fascism in Spain and in Germany. All these discussions had a lasting effect on my consciousness.

The 1960s was a period of growth in Canada and of prosperity for many Canadians. However, for farmers it was a period of increased mechanization which forced less productive farmers off the land. I was influenced by these forces at work during this period of time because my family lived on one of those small farms that was too small to provide for a family. When I was 14 years old, my family decided to move off the farm into the city. My father was unemployed for a time, but eventually obtained work as a construction labourer. My mother found work as a school janitor. My working class consciousness was formulated in this atmosphere.

When I began to observe the world through my own eyes and organize my views of it, many tremendous, thought-provoking social changes were occurring. The threat of nuclear war was ever present. I remember having dreams where the earth was only craters. The Vietnam War influenced me tremendously. There were debates about Canadian military involvement, the use of tiger cages to keep the opponents of the U.S. army and South Vietnamese government, the Mai Lai massacre, and the murder of Vietnamese people by the US army who threw them out of airplanes in an attempt to extract information. This period included massive anti-war rallies and marches all over the world. The war in Vietnam was a daily news item. The injustice perpetrated upon a people and their country could not be escaped. Canadian independence and foreign policy were avidly discussed. How much foreign investment should we have? Should we send troops to Vietnam? These questions, ideas, and issues re-emphasized my empathy with the concerns of average people, especially working people.

These circumstances first gave me an awareness of the history of the people that built this country and the world in which we live. These events permeated my mind and built my interest in working people, their often unrecorded history, and their lives.

A second interest brought me to this study. I attended school until grade 9 in a farming community about 125

kilometers from Edmonton. My class of approximately thirty students consisted of some students from the town, but most came from small farms within approximately thirty-five kilometers of the town where the school was situated.

At this time, I was highly motivated academically. I remember returning home from school after a lengthy bus ride. After a short play-time and supper, it was time for homework. I always completed my homework and studied hard for tests. I achieved honours each year until grade 9. From grade 4 until I left this school awards were presented for academic achievement in each class. I beamed each year as I was awarded a plaque or trophy for the highest academic achievement in my grade.

Early in my grade nine year, I transferred to a junior high school in Edmonton. After this I went to a large, city high school for my last three years of public schooling. During this time, I began to lose my motivation to reach for the top academically. I spent much time during high school in the Resource Centre or Library, not studying, but talking with friends who seemed similarly unmotivated. Sometimes, we shed the image of even attempting to study, retiring to the sanctuary of the Cafeteria where we would spend spares or skip periods to play cards and wrangle over prices for left-over pastries with the school chef. At other times, we would wander across the street to the shopping center, only to wander aimlessly around there.

My marks slipped drastically during those years. I went from being a motivated honour student to being an unmotivated, average one. I remember saying to members of my family, probably in defense of my lower-than-usual academic achievement, "What's the difference if I receive 60s or 80s?" Many of my friends also seemed to undergo the same erosion of interest in school, marks, and achievement. One, for example, spent two years in grade 12 only to find that he was still short of one credit to obtain his diploma (100 credits).

Though school, in general, did not interest me at that time, I feared each exam because I hadn't studied. I knew I might fail. This feeling was new for me, a feeling I disliked. However, I had no particular reason to change my habit.

I was an avid reader until grade 9 ---reading as much as one book each evening. I remember going into the high school library and marveling at some of the good books. However, after grade 9, I stopped reading also.

One flicker of interest for me was my social studies classes and social studies options. I remember class discussions of "hot" current affairs issues; essays on themes that I was interested in (the space race, capitalism and socialism, and the plight of the native people); guest speakers such as Mel Hurtig, and games such as "World War II" and "The Ghetto." These issues were important to me

because they dealt with or affected working people, the oppressed, the average person; therefore, I enjoyed learning about them.

Years later, I spent considerable amounts of time pondering my own and my friends' lack of enthusiasm for school. I wondered why "a switch" was suddenly turned off in many students that blackened their attitudes towards school? What caused this sudden passivity in some students while other students totally rejected such an important part of a person's life?

Today, I continue to see the same lack of motivation and rejection of schooling system in many students. Kids continue to "fight" school, physically attending but mentally rejecting it. Others become frustrated and quit. Finally, a few even try to physically pull the schools apart or desecrate them in whatever way they can. A desire to understand these phenomena also motived me to carry out this study.

A third reason motivated me to this research. As a junior high social studies teacher, I became aware of some interesting features in The Alberta Social Studies Curriculum (1981). A specific feature of this Curriculum, conspicuous by its absence, is a recommendation for systematic study and/or analysis of the contributory role that workers have played and are playing in the social, economic, and political development of Alberta and Canada.

Though this social group presently makes up a vast amount (see Appendix A) of Canadian society, it receives minimal study and analysis due to only limited description of it and its role in society.

The 1981 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum. A short analysis of how the 1981 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum and prescribed and recommended resources treat labour will be made. This Curriculum has not totally excluded labour from units of study. Some study of workers, their lives, history, culture, and of work is done in various places in the Curriculum depending upon the prescribed topic. In addition, the Curriculum guide, prescribed resources, and recommended resources suggest a particular approach to sections where workers are studied.

Usually workers are described in a specific and isolated time period; they are not made the focal point of a complete historical study. This lack of focus can be seen by surveying the topics that The Alberta Social Studies Curriculum (1981) proposes that students in Alberta schools study. Thus, workers and their actions are a result of what is happening in that society at that period of time. Generalizability is, therefore, limited by this atomistic approach.

Second, workers' socio-economic situations are portrayed as being the result of technological development,

a technologically deterministic description of society, rather than as a result of the manner in which a particular society is economically and socially organized. Therefore, people are directed to look at technology as being the cause of many of our problems in society (Horvath, 1979, pp. 198-199). History becomes a history of technology rather than a history of people or of social organization.

Third, workers' roles in society are usually analyzed simply in terms of their fight to improve their economic and social conditions. Little credit is given to workers for their role in doing the actual work of building, organizing, and running the mines, mills, and factories that exist today.

Fourth, solutions that workers propose to solve their own or general social problems are often different than those advocated by other social groups or classes in society. Sometimes, these solutions call(ed) for radical changes in society or at least in certain institutions. An example of this today is one solution that is being proposed by labour to partially solve the problem of unemployment --- the 32 hour work week. This controversial solution and others are rarely written into social studies texts and curricula.

Fifth, a strong bias against workers, unions, or other worker organizations and activities is often a characteristic of many historical and other social studies

books and materials. There is little study of the formation of unions in Canada during the 1930s. Neither is there mention of the organizing role of worker organizations such as the Workers' Unity League which organized or helped organize some of the major unions existing in Canada today.

Sixth, a bias is often presented more strongly through the use of loaded words and emotionally charged events or arguments. One student text, The Rise of Organized Labour (1968), refers to the International Workers of the World (IWW) as being "arch radical" (Oliver & Newman, 1968, p. 36). The same text presents the following emotionally charged event for student edification:

> Radical union leaders spurred workers to bloody violence in the textile mills of North Carolina and the coal fields of West Virginia and Illinois (1968, p. 37).

Numerous articles and books have been published which recognize the systematic exclusion in school curricula, textbooks, and materials in Canada of labour studies and the biased content or method of portraying labour (Hodgetts, 1968; Fuller, 1981; Osborne, 1980; Coulter, 1979; and Morton, 1980). Osborne, for example, has this to say about the problem of the lack of labour studies in our schools:

> In school textbooks, working class or labour history, whether old style or new, is conspicuous by its absence. Textbooks have long concentrated upon Canada's political and constitutional development to the neglect of other topics. Although since the 1920s textbooks have given increasing attention to social history, it has always been secondary to the more important task of describing Canada's emergence as a

> political community. When they do describe social history, textbooks do so very impersonally. They present a history full of trends and developments but largely devoid of people (1980, pp. 2-3).

The Alberta Social Studies Curriculum (1981), the curriculum guide developed for teachers, continues Alberta Education's methodological presentation of political and constitutional history that is used in the social studies textbooks. Concepts such as culture, representative government, institution, economic development, materialism, and technological change and case studies such as the Pygmies, the Bushmen, Africa, Great Britain, and the U.S.S.R. dominate the Curriculum. Within each of the three topics prescribed for grades 11 and 12, one finds presented only a few elements of social history and aspects of labour. Grade 9, Topic A: Selected Market Economies, comes closest to presenting anything near a labour history course.

The description (on pp. 66-67) of this unit in the curriculum guide defines the limitations on the study of labour history and work. The focus of study is "impacts of industrialization" in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain. Work, workers, and labour history are relegated to a secondary role and only viewed through the process of industrialization. This unit presents a particular view of society; one that is narrowed to a discussion of the development of technology and how society is determined by technological development (Schwartz & O'Connor, 1976, p.

24). Second, the "Competing Values and Social Issue" listed in the curriculum guide further limits the study of work, workers, and labour history. They place workers in a position where they are analyzed solely from an economic point of view (Horvath, 1979, pp. 201-202). Workers are presented as having two economic choices: maximizing their demand will give them unlimited materialism, or curbing their economic demand could give them a good quality of life. Thus, Alberta students must decide if industrial growth should be limited. This question seems to imply that in a market economy industrial growth is continuous and limitless. Also, there seems to be an implication that if workers want a quality life, they should limit their economic demands. This technologically and economically oriented view of labour is replicated in materials and textbooks prescribed and recommended (Update for Social Studies (1982-83), p. 13) for use in this unit.

The conclusion that one can draw from these documents is that the social studies Alberta students will study contains a bias against labour. This bias is achieved through what seems to be a systematic exclusion of material favorable to labour and the presentation of other material from an ideological perspective which is hostile to labour.

The content of the social studies courses taught in the schools of this province may have important consequences for students, particularily students from working class

families. The exclusion of this group and their perspective from systematic study in school would mean that students would leave school not knowing the history and social contribution of this group to the building of our society. Also, labour's view of society would not be taught to students. This shortcoming may help one understand the rejection of, or rebellion against, school in our society by some working class children and adults. My question is to attempt to come to a deeper understanding of how working class people view their schooling and the relationship of school to work and their lives.

The Questions of the Study

1. How do workers recall the schooling experience?

2. What is the relationship between what was taught in school, how it was taught, and workers' achievement and motivation in school?

3. How did workers recall reacting to their schooling at the time?

4. What relationship is there between the schooling experience and workers' lives now?

Implications

Knowing the views of working people concerning their schooling could bring us somewhat closer to understanding what the built-in bias in our education system means to them. An understanding of the view of reality that students are presented with and the manner in which this presentation takes place could have tremendous implications for curricular orientations, the content of resources prescribed and recommended for use by Alberta Education, and the organization of student learning experiences. Understanding how workers view their education could also have implications for the manner in which the social studies curriculum is organized and developed.

This study may also have implications for our view of working class children. It may help answer questions that for too long have been relegated only to the psychologists. Some of these questions include such concerns as lack of motivation, the inability of chidren to achieve, and discipline problems.

Finally, this study may have implications for the education of other non-elite groups in our society. It may add clarification to why these groups, such as native people, don't achieve as well as might be expected in school.

Definition of Terms

worker- one who works for a wage or salary as a means of maintaining himself or herself and family.

working class-a group of people who work for a wage or salary as means of earning their livelihood as opposed to receiving one's primary income from profits through ownership or investment.

houses of labour- Canadian Labour Congress, Canadian Federation of Labour or Confederation of Canadian Unions.

elite-individuals or groups who by virtue of their social, economic, or political status hold an extraordinary amount of power and influence over decision-making processes and events.

technologically deterministic-an action or event occurring as a result of the existence and control by machines as opposed to the people who own and implement the use of machines.

social history-the past deeds and events of people who are not members of the established social, economic, and political elite.

prescribed resources-the books and materials assessed by Alberta Education as best for school systems to be able to achieve the objectives of The Alberta Social Studies Curriculum (1981).

recommended resources- books and pamphlets complementary to the prescribed resources, as assessed by Alberta Education, to assist the school system in achieving the objectives of The Alberta Social Studies Curriculum (1981).

alienation-a person's dehumanized attitude and response to a world in which one has no control over the creative development of one's physical, mental, and/or aesthetic abilities due to the private appropriation of the results of one's labour.

Delimitations

1. This will be a qualitative study interpreting three workers recollections of their school experiences and relating them to their lives today.

2. This study concentrates on the education received by workers in Alberta schools. Though there is an immense similarity between the education system in Alberta and those in other parts of Canada or even the United States and Britain, time and resources necessitate delimitation of this study to workers who received their

education in Alberta schools.

3. Workers in Alberta consist of an extremely large and heterogeneous group (see Limitations). This study will select three people from unions that are members of the Alberta Federation of Labour. They are also chosen as the representatives of the largest house of labour in Alberta.

Limitations

1. A discussion of the consequences of the social studies program existing in Alberta schools cannot be considered outside of the context in which these programs are prepared, circulated, and administered nor outside of the context which we, in general, live. The social studies programs, other school subjects, or schools in general cannot be considered to be the total cause of particular school or societal problems that this thesis will discuss. Other institutions and social forces would have to be analyzed for their contributary role as a cause, catalyst, or solver of social problems.

   The role of the family or parents, whose views are generally moulded by the particular society, has an important influence on children. Schools, in general, socialize students to the view of the particular society or, more specifically, to the view as determined by the

dominant groups in that particular society. The government, who determines economic, political, cultural, and social structures in society, influences the views and behavior of children. Therefore, by the time an analysis of the influence of social studies courses on the formation of habits and views of children are concerned, one must admit that many other factors are at work.

2. The diversity existing in the labour movement limits one's possibility of obtaining a clear generalization about workers' views of work, workers, and schooling. This diversity of public and private sector workers, highly and lowly paid workers, highly and minimally educated, large and powerful and small and weak unions, and members of various houses of labour cannot be reflected in an absolute manner in a study of this nature.

CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I will review what the literature says about students and their schooling. It will be composed of two major parts. I will deal with student motivation and achievement, the definition of alienation, the sources of alienation in the school, and how alienation manifests itself in schools and society in the first part of this chapter. The second part of this chapter will deal with student and pedagogical responses to the concerns discussed in the first part of this chapter. I will deal with student resistance to alienation, paradigmatic proposals for educational reform, and labour studies as an aspect of a Marxist reform program.

In Chapter 1, I charted my experiences of the school system. This chapter builds upon these experiences by relating what a survey of the literature says about schools. Chapter 3 will provide an outline of the research design used to collect the experiences of workers presented in Chapter 4.

Student Alienation

The negative current state of student attitudes toward school is a concern reflected in many articles in educational journals and books. This concern is evident in Canada and other countries having similar educational

systems (ie. the United States, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand).

School Achievement and Motivation. Much of the concern focuses on student motivation and achievement. Bibby and Posterski indicate that half of Canadian students are not at all happy with their schooling (1985, p. 45). Fraser (1981) quotes research from the United States, New Zealand, and England which indicates a decline in the general attitude of students to school as one moves up the grade level.

Social studies is particularly criticized by students. Fraser discusses a study showing that student attitudes to social studies decrease as their grade level increases. Morrissett, Hawke, and Superka (1981) state that students do not see social studies as being relevant. They indicate that student interest and achievement in social studies has been declining at all grade levels and that this phenomenon has been more pronounced in social studies than in other subjects.

Schug, Todd, and Berry (1984) found that students ranked social studies fourth in importance for their future lives. It ranked behind English, mathematics, and reading. Most cited the lack of relevant content as the main problem. Younger students (grade six) indicated a preference for studying history, while grade twelve students preferred the study of human behaviour. These students were critical of

the existing content as being "boring," "redundant," "too detailed for a clear understanding," and "too far removed from their own experiences." (1984, p. 386)

Alienation. Some writers have interpreted apparent problems of relevance as evidence of a broader question of alienation in our society. LeRoy (1965) traces the historical definition of alienation back to the writings of Karl Marx, who stated that alienation is a product of capitalist society. Private ownership of the means of production means that a worker does not labour for oneself. Through the sale of one's labour power, the ability to work, the worker maintains oneself. However, one's labour power and the products of one's labour are alienated from the worker because they are owned by the capitalist. Thus, work "ceases to be the expression of the creative powers of the worker" (LeRoy, 1965, p. 2); it ceases to be part of the process of being human. Work becomes a means solely to survive rather than a way to freely express or develop a person's physical, mental, and/or aesthetic abilities. LeRoy concludes that work "is a kind of enslavement" and "as a consequence he becomes passive and apathetic." (1965, p.3)

Waddington (1974) describes three effects of alienation. First, people begin to view their work not as a way to express themselves, but as "something which is intensely disliked and only performed in order to get money

to live." (1974, p. 18) Second, people become estranged from each other: the capitalist from the worker because the capitalist would like to maximize profit and sees the exploitation of the worker as a means to this end. On the other hand, the worker desires to minimize the work done for the capitalist because anything extra means that the worker is giving of oneself with no return. People become estranged from each other because of the competitiveness and selfishness which society breeds. Waddington suggests that "the worker...finds it impossible to love the neighbour who tries to keep his wages down." (1974, p. 19) Third, Waddington states that people become alienated from themselves because they are not able to express themselves freely through their labour. Because people are deeply social, they are going against nature in being estranged from each other. He also states that many people feel "boxed in, frustrated, and deeply unhappy, though many of them do not understand why." (1974, p. 19)

Aptheker (1965) views alienation as "dehumanization" as expressed in "suicide," "crime," "defacement of public property," "cruelty to children," "racism," "the African slave trade," "the nazi crematoria," and "new weapons of human annihilation." (1965, pp. 16-20) He also indicated its roots as being in the "private possession of the means of production and in all the antagonisms either created by

or intensified by that system." (1965, p. 21) As examples of these antagonisms, he listed:

> labor a commodity, production social but appropriation individual, racism, male supremacy, the jealousy and hatred separating the young and the old, the systematic frustration of people by inhibiting their best and encouraging their worst (1965, p. 21).

Alienation in the School. In dealing with alienation in schools, one must understand the schools' role within a particular society (Gonzalez, 1982). To understand this role, one can ask similar questions of the schools as one would ask of the factory. Does the working class have input into their programs of study? Are students and teachers allowed to express themselves and freely able to develop their creative abilities? And, what are the goals and results of schooling?

Gonzalez (1982) explains that "the basic function of schools is to produce a consciousness or ideology within students that obscures the relationship between their lives and capitalist production." (1982, p. 146) He states that schools "are instruments, at once political and social, created for the survival of the social order." (1982, p. 39) Therefore, alienation would be increased by the school system where education treated working class students as commodities or potential workers (DeGrood, 1983, pp. 167-168). Students are taught to accept alienation, an inhuman condition and process. It would mean that school

would not teach students about the world as it is. Learning would be an alienating experience similar to that of working where the students would not learn and experience their humanness. They would not be able to freely develop their physical, mental, and aesthetic abilities. These would be developed by the state in the interests of capital. Gonzalez concludes that alienation is basic to schools in a capitalist society.

> Schools automatically turn children away from learning, because they are taught to doubt themselves and their own abilities and potential. Schools perform their political task by teaching the majority of people to rely not on themselves, but on external authority. This kind of learning gradually undermines the self-confidence and motivation necessary to sustain individual effort and consequently to broaden and deepen learning (1982, pp. 147-148).

Kozal (1983) gives a telling example of the simulation game as an extreme form of alienation. Reality is simulated by lifting the students out of the real world.

> This wholesale neglect of the world outside the window is best dramatized by that insidious vehicle of scholastic alienation, "the simulation game." We close the windows, deflect the light, absorb the sound, etherize the heart, and neutralize the soul. Then, with such great care and at such vast expense, we bring in simulation games to try to imitate the world that we have excluded (1983, p. 19).

Stratification as a Form of Alienation. Several perspectives exist on the manner that stratification takes place in schools. Beck and Muia (1981) quote research indicating that a major task of the school system is to sort

students, deciding who will get what kind of education and who will go into the upper social and economic categories.

> A 1965 study by L. Cervantes suggests the "typical" dropout as more likely to be male (by 53 to 47 percent), to live in the South than the North [USA], and to be a slum-dweller than a suburbanite. J.L. Kaplan and E.C. Luck (1977) indicate that dropouts usually come from large urban or small rural school districts, and that 31 percent belong to racial minorities. J. Backman et al. reported in 1972 that typical... characteristics of the dropout include... that the overwhelming majority are from blue-collar or lower white-collar homes; the lower the socio-economic level of his family, the greater a student's chance of becoming a dropout (1981, p. 16).

Seeley (1987) also argues that schools sort and select students. He states that poorer children are more likely to be in schools where students are more passive and less successful. Willis (1977) argues that the resistance displayed by working class students he interviewed prepared them for working class jobs in which resistance was common.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) and Gonzalez (1982) express another perspective on stratification. They feel that the implications of this type of curricula go beyond simply affecting the individual. They argue that schools are not independent of society and cannot have an independent role to play in society. They conclude that our's is an education system to <u>reproduce</u> a stratified society.

> Every child born into the world should be looked upon by society as so much raw material to be manufactured. Its quality is to be tested. It is the business of society, as an intelligent economist, to make the best of it (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 125).

Our schools are, in a sense, factories in which the raw

> materials are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life. The specifications for manufacturing came from the demands of the twentieth century civilization, and it is the business of the school to build its pupils to the specifications laid down. This demands good tools, specialized machinery, continuous measurement of production to see if it is according to specifications, the elimination of waste in manufacture and a large variety of output (1976, p. 199).

Therefore, one of the effects of a school curriculum in a capitalist society is to reinforce the class background of students and prepare them for a similar future.

Gender Stereotyping as a Form of Alienation.

Alienation in school occurs in other ways. Willers (1984) states that one half of our school population suffers from discrimination strictly on the basis of gender. She indicates that socialization is a major barrier to women participating in the job market. She quotes a study done by the Science Council of Canada identifying some reasons why female students drop science and math pursuits. This study found that girls are often encouraged to take science and math less than boys. She also indicates that sex-stereotyping exists in school materials and that, in general, much of our teaching reinforces "sex-stereotyping and job segregation in the workplace." She explains that this scenario is one that most female students see for themselves.

> Most girls in secondary schools today, when asked where they will be in five years, see themselves as working for a while, marrying, raising their family, and not

> having to worry about going out to work thereafter (1984, p. 28).

Hannah (1982) quotes a study done with grade 4 students that supports the findings of the Science Council of Canada. The study quoted by Hannah showed adults praising high achieving boys, but not high achieving girls. Martin (1986) also states that education is "gender-related" because women are excluded from the curriculum. He argues that this exclusion constitutes a hidden curriculum that causes alienation.

What we don't see in the literature discussed here is the relationship between society and the schools in the socialization and alienation of women. Do schools operate independently of society, or do they reinforce what exists in society as Gonzalez argued happens with stratification? This aspect of alienation is important to consider in understanding the role of education in the lives of working class women. It may indicate why women achieve as described above in some aspects of their schooling, in society, and in particular jobs.

The Meaning of Alienation for Students. School experience can have important repercussions upon the future lives of children. Schooling that is relevant to the lives of students can have a liberating effect on them (LeRoy, 1965, p. 9; Aptheker, 1965, p. 25) by allowing students to understand their society, to understand how to change it,

and thus to begin the process of doing so. Conversely, irrelevant schooling that hides the reality of life in society and that is anti-human can alienate students from school.

Beck and Muia (1981) explain that cynical and negative attitudes toward school, parents, and society are developed by many students. They identify five stages of developing negative attitudes toward school. They are:

1. A loss of interest in school which leads to lower grades.
2. Frustration and begining to skip classes. He/she comes into conflict with school authorities.
3. Because of the student's disruptive behaviour, he/she is forced to leave class or is suspended from school.
4. The student becomes more negative and defensive because of parental involvement.
5. The student decides to quit school (1981, p. 16).

The initial stages of alienation have already been documented at the beginnning of this chapter. Bibby and Posterski indicate that this stage of alienation in school may produce "considerable stress and anxiety (1981, p. 59). Different aspects of the alienation process at work can also be shown. Byrnes (1984) argues that some children are "actively rejected" or "overlooked" and become withdrawn. She argues that these aspects of schooling lead to the "development of low self-esteem, feelings of powerlessness, blocked creativity, extreme shyness, defensiveness, and discouragement." (1984, p. 51)

Gonzalez states that a lack of confidence and motivation in students is a purposeful result of educational

policies. He argues that psychological damage "creates social problems manifested as dropouts, disinterest in formal learning, low reading and writing skills - all due to low self-esteem and negative self-concepts." (1982, p. 148)

The lack of student interest and motivation may also be evident in other respects. Students stop doing homework. Time also quotes an investigating panel in New York as discovering that homework assignments had been cut nearly in half between 1968 and 1977 with the main reason being that students did not do the assignments (Time, June 16, 1980, p. 58).

A further example of alienation is the individual who is afraid of the future; afraid of change and what change might bring (Arters, 1981). Arters explains how large numbers of people are suffering from the phenomenon of "future shock." The cause is, in his view, that "our schools are not incorporating curricula to prepare a child or youth for an emerging new society." (1981, p. 30)

Hays (1981) explains how this phenomenon affects students. He describes an epidemic amongst grade twelve students called "senioritis." The symptoms of this annual phenomenon reveal themselves in this way:

> More than 200,000 high school students fall victim to "senioritis," with symptoms of lack of enthusiasm, fits of irresponsibility, and a generally depressed effect punctuated by occasional outbursts of irritability (1981, p. 50).

The immediate cause of the disease is described by the same author.

> In the senior year of high school, we have a state of anticipatory grief. The adolescent's world is falling apart. Faced with the reality that "the end is near," he is torn by a struggle between a secure past in childhood and a seemingly indeterminate future beyond high school (1981, p. 51).

Willis (1977) found many British working class students do not find their schooling relevant to their lives; they become frustrated and lose interest in it. Sometimes these students are pushed even further by an alienating school situation, to the point that school is viewed as being totally useless. An example of this situation is gleened from interviews with students from working class families in Britain.

> PW Do you think you've learnt anything at school, has it changed or moulded your values?
>
> Joey I don't think school does fucking anything to you (...) It never has had much effect on anybody I don't think [after] you've learnt the basics. I mean school, it's fucking four hours a day. But it ain't the teachers who mould you, it's fucking kids you meet. You'm only with the teachers 30 percent of the time in school, the other fucking two-thirds are just talking, fucking pickin' an argument, messing about (1977, p. 26).

Alienation from school may have very dire consequences for some individuals. Estimates that there are five million illiterates in Canada, of whom one million can't read or write at all show that many Canadians are faring very poorly in our education system (Barrett, 1983, p.1, B4; Goble,

1981, p. 53). Beck and Muia (1981) indicate that 25% of American children do not complete high school (1981, p. 16). The latter authors point to many factors as important in students dropping out of school. However, they also suggest that schools could do much more to keep potential dropouts in school. Fine and Rosenberg (1984) are even more direct in their criticism of the alienating education system. They comment on the characteristics of the education system which produces the student dropout.

> From the margins of a system from which they have been pushed out or have been exiled, dropouts have exposed hidden curricula, threatened hierarchical relations in schools, challenged intolerance for dissent in classrooms, and resisted the tradeoff between conformity snd success operating in traditional schools. Further, it is clear that class domination and alienation affect students' school experiences, particularly for working-class and poor youths and blacks and Hispanics across social classes. And it has been shown that school characteristics systematically affect dropout rates (1984, p. 27).

While many of the approximately five million school dropouts in Canada lack literacy for other reasons, school alienation seems to play an important part in this situation.

Alienation of Youth in Society. Larson (1983), Bibby and Posterski (1985), and Beck and Muia (1981) present statistics that show the problem of alienation for young people does not begin or end at school. Just as there is a connection between school, society, and home in problems related to the schooling of the child; there is also this same connection between the existence of young people's

problems outside of school. In other words, students who are frustrated, depressed, and fight against the school system often replicate these symptoms outside of school.

Larson (1983) in an article entitled "Who will our children be?" shows concern for the behavior of young people in our society. He quotes these statistics published by The Alberta Committee on Children and Youth to model this concern:

> Almost one-half of Alberta high school students have used marijuana or hashish.
>
> About 45 percent of all junior or senior high school students admitted to getting drunk in the past six months in a 1976 study (1983, p. 15).

Bibby and Posterski quote similar figures for Canada as a whole. They indicate that 30% of teenagers admit to using drugs (1985, p. 149).

Larson also shows another dimension of alienation in society. He again quotes from The Alberta Committee on Children and Youth the conclusion that "the number of juvenile delinquents in Alberta is increasing." He adds that the "convictions of juveniles quadrupled between 1971 and 1978." (1983, p. 15)

Beck and Muia (1981) showed the ultimate solution of students in school who cannot cope with the situation any longer is to quit school. Larson presents further figures from The Alberta Committee on Children and Youth that indicate how troubled youth sometimes act.

> Over 10,000 Alberta children ran away from home in 1979.
>
> Suicide is the second leading cause of death among teenagers in Alberta. The rate for teens (15-19) had increased twelve and a half times from 1951 to 1976 (1983, p. 15).

Bibby and Posterski quote Canadian figures that complement Larson's. They indicate that in 1982, 1,300 teenagers committed suicide. In addition, studies indicate that there are between 30 and 100 attempts for every success (1985, p. 69). They explain that "depression and stress are seen as the key immediate precipitating factors" (1985, p.70).

Larson argues that in our society there is an "inadequate socialization of our children" (1983, p. 14). Problems arise because young people do not have the knowledge and/or skills which could have allowed them to deal with some of their problems. These are some of the facts that Bibby and Posterski quote that present this case more clearly:

> [There are] increasing levels of pregnancy among girls fifteen to nineteen... In 1975 the rate for that sector was 7.5%. By 1982 it had risen to 9.6% (1985, p. 81).

These authors quote statistics that indicate 79% of those pregnancies ended in abortions (1985, p. 81).

Larson quotes these figures from The Alberta Committee on Children and Youth that tell much the same story.

> 2,424 Alberta teenagers obtained therapeutic abortions in 1980. This is about 34 percent of all legal

> abortions in Alberta. Of these 7 percent had had a previous abortion (1983. p. 15).

Youth alienation as evidenced from the problems described above raise the following question: How many social problems can be traced directly or indirectly to the lack of a relevant education system? One must ask this question at a time when we are inundated with a host of social problems, the like of which we have not seen since the 1930s. Examples of these problems are high unemployment, inflation, and crime rates, increased preparations for war, high divorce rates, massive poverty, sky-rocketing numbers of bankruptcies, high levels of stress, and increasing numbers of people who are desperate to find ways to feed their families. Our education system cannot prevent all of these problems, nor solve all of them. However, one must ask if we do not have a moral duty to attempt to prepare students for a society that is rife with these concerns? Should we not, and can we not assist students in understanding the cause of these problems, so that they can deal with them, and eventually overcome them?

Responses to Alienation

The previous sections of this chapter have established that alienation is a product of society. Schools play a role in fostering alienation through assisting in developing students' attitudes, views, and way of acting. Therefore,

student alienation from school is manifested in the manner that has been outlined to this point.

However, the description of school alienation would not be complete without some description of the responses to it on the part of students and pedagogues. The second part of this chapter begins with a description of student resistance to alienation. It continues with a brief outline of various educational paradigms which outline how they view and would deal with the problems hitherto discussed. Finally, this section gives a brief outline of the place of a labour studies program in the social studies curriculum.

Resistance. Resistance to the educational process is common and has many forms. Willis (1977) found that sometimes students actively resist the socialization process of the school because it was not seen by some as being intrinsically memorable. Challenging the school system, however, was remembered by some students. Willis found that forgetting anything that was to be learned is one way of resisting school; skipping school was another.

The experience of skipping to get drunk on the last day of school was seen as important for students interviewed by Willis. He found that this was something by which they remembered school. His interview with a student highlights this point:

PW Why was it important to get pissed on the last day?

Spanksy It's a special thing. It only happens once in your life don't it? I mean, you know, on that day we were at school right, you'm school kids, but the next day I was at work, you know what I mean?

PW Course, you went to work the very next day.

Spanksy Yeah, I got drunk, had a sleep, and I went to work (...) if we hadn't've done that you know, we wouldn't've remembered it, we'd've stopped at school [ie. instead of going to the pub], it'd've been just another day. No, when we did that we've got something to remember the last day by, we've got something to remember school by (1977, p. 20).

Students react in many other ways, in school and out of school, to what they begin to think is the irrelevant and oppressive school system. Groves and Klinck quote figures from a student survey conducted at James Fowler High School in Calgary that show students work many hours at part-time jobs. This survey indicated that 50% of grade 10, 70% of grade 11, and 75% of grade 12 students work at after school jobs. It also showed that they work on an average 15, 18, 20 hours per week, respectively (1982, p. 17). These figures would seem to indicate that students spend a minimum amount of time attending to school work.

Time reported how students resist the school system from inside it. They indicate that students were defiant of authorities attempts to pressure them into changing or conforming. It reported in a feature story on education that in the previous year 110,000 teachers or 5% of the U.S. total were attacked by students (June 16, 1980, p. 58). In

Jones' and Tanner's (1981) view, discipline, not learning, has become the biggest problem in our schools.

Beck and Muia have already indicated that dropping out of school is another way of actively resisting this process. They quote from a 1969 study that indicated 25 percent of American youth were found to be quitting school (1981, p.16).

That students resist the alienating environment of the school seems unquestionable. That this situation exists only incidently is not the case. Livingstone states that,

> over the past generation, the incidence of such individual student acts as classroom violence, truancy, vandalism and dropping out has generally increased in the state-run, mass-based school systems of all western industrial countries (1983, p. 5).

The evidence of students resisting schooling in a variety of ways seems rather clear. It would seem that the cries of an alienated youth are coming through loud and clear.

Several authors argue another perspective of student resistance. Waddington (1974) and Gonzalez (1982) relate the processes taking place in the schools to what is taking place in society. Waddington (1974) explains that historically as people work they make improvements in the productive forces that cause social change and development. People develop new techniques for doing things; they develop new machines; and they increase their knowledge to further

improve production. The forces of production together with the relations of production form the mode of production.

Concurrently, people look to benefit from their labour through improvements in their own lives and their children's. However, Waddington (1974) explains that the development of the forces of production outpace political and ideological development. At some point the out-dated forms of production relations do not allow improvements in the forces of production and halt or reduce people's standard of living. At this point, contradictions in the form of alienation may increase and its source, the oudated form of social organization, becomes clearer to people. These contradictions result in an increase in the struggle of the classes that are not in control of society. These classes attempt to eliminate these contradictions. This class struggle, "the motor force of history (Politzer, 1976, p. 130), causes a change in production relations and may lead to a social change to a new mode of production, a new type of society.

People's struggles for a better life may take many forms, according to Waddington (1974). In a capitalist society such as ours, some of these would include resistance to changes in factories or society that do not benefit working people. These struggles may take the form of strikes or attempts to take power.

Gonzalez shows the connection between the methods and content of student learning and alienation in society. He states that "the perennial crisis in education is really a crisis emanating from the social order." (1982, p. 40) Because schools are preparing students ideologically to accept society as is, the relationship existing between classes in society is reflected in the schools. The alienating society is reflected in alienating schools because schools are attempting to hide or resolve the class conflict existing in society. For schools to do other than teach students to accept the class society and their position in it, would mean they would be functioning independently of those controlling society and this would cause anarchy and chaos. Therefore, Gonzalez concludes that "antidemocracy in the schools is a necessay political device [used in capitalist society] to resolve the class conflict." (1982, p. 148)

Clearly students resist alienating schools just as workers resist alienating society. The alienation also seems to emanate from one and the same source. However, none of the authors discussed here make a strong link in practice between the events and processes occurring in society and the actions of students in school.

Educational Reform. The need for educational reform in the face of a changing society is a constant given. This need is evident in that as society changes and develops, the purpose and methodology of public education often comes under scrutiny, question, and attack. The kind of reforms necessary to allow the continued development of society becomes problematic. At times the idea of societal development itself may come into question. This questioning raises further questions regarding the content and organization of education. This section of Chapter 2 provides an overview of some of the approaches to educational reform found in contemporary educational literature.

There are various approaches to understanding the purpose, content, and organization of the school system. In fact, the list of 'pigeon holes' which define educational philosophies can be boundless depending upon where one is on the philosophical spectrum and how one views the various approaches. However, all the philosophical schools at some point raise the following questions: What should students be learning? What should be the purpose of these learning experiences? And, how should student learning experiences be organized? Answers to these questions will provide a rough framework with which to elucidate the various educational paradigms. Livingstone describes a paradigm as

being models of inquiry that guide scientific work, providing a conceptual framework for understanding the phenomenon to be studied, indicating the sorts of questions that should be asked and the relevant types of relationships, methods of inquiry and bodies of evidence (1983, p. 16).

Gonzalez (1982) discerns three different paradigms in relation to the content, organization, and function of schooling. These paradigms are the liberal, radical, and Marxist. Gonzalez subscribes to the latter.

Gonzalez calls the first paradigm "the liberal position." He states that the liberal position argues "in general for the logic of schools as they [presently] exist in practical and ideological terms." (1982, p. 29) Fisher (1983) outlines a view of the liberal (he refers to it as structural functionalist) perspective on education and how it perceives the results of schooling. He states that this paradigm will,

> characterize education as a positive force which through socialization reproduces a meritocratic democracy. Students learn appropriate norms and values which in turn allow them to both compete in and fit into the market place. Education serves an integrating function in the social system, and hence provides the cement which holds the status quo together (1983, p. 219).

Fisher concludes that education must allow students to "exercise greater control over their own lives and to play a greater collective control in society." However, he

suggests that this be done by "making the educational experience relevant for all social classes." (1983, p. 224)

Byrnes (1984) argues that our education is a system based upon "passivity" rather than "responsible and active participation." She argues for a curriculum that "facilitates such processes as development of personal responsibility, involvement in one's learning, decision making, cooperation, and communication." (1984, p. 52) She also argues that teachers should become familiar with "various sociometric instruments and their uses." (1984, p.52) Teachers should examine their own attitudes and behaviour toward these children, and various other professional or social agencies should be called in to assist these children.

Seeley (1987) makes a similar liberal argument. He argues for greater involvement of the community as a whole - business, parents, peer groups, local churches, and community organizations - in the educational enterprise. Schug, et al. stated that one implication of their study is that students may come to understand the importance of social studies if they had more "community-based, 'real world' experiences." (1987, p. 387). They recommend that students should have more active learning experiences and teachers should use a greater variety of teaching methods.

Within the liberal paradigm, many features of the progressive educational reforms that resulted from the

writings of people like John Dewey can be seen. One feature is the concern for the individual student. We see in the comments of Fisher, Byrnes, Seeley, and Schug et al. an interest in making the education system work for all students, "social equality." (Gonzalez, 1982, p. 31) Included is a concern with preparing each student for life; developing each student to become a functioning or active member of society based upon their individual potential which would allow them "upward mobility." (Gonzalez, 1982, p. 31) The educational institution needs to be reformed to provide each student with a general education that would allow them to function within a changing society. This change could be implemented by having a strong link between the societal institutions and the schools, and moving away from rote learning.

This paradigm and the specific proposals for reform listed above, seem to suggest that there should be equality of experience for the oppressed, but not that the oppressed should be equal. These proposals change nothing in society and can change little in schools. It does not deal with the tie between the mode of production and the production relations and production forces which make up the superstructure. This paradigm also views the schools as an "independent force." (Gonzalez, 1982, p. 31) They don't deal with who controls society and the schools, and for what purpose the schools are organized. Thus, the above authors

do not carry out a critical analysis of the causes of the problems discussed, relating them to the problems in society. Neither do they recommend change in the structure of society or education that produces the "withdrawn" child that Byrnes discusses in her article. In the end it would seem that Fisher, Byrnes, Seeley, and Schug et al. all have good intentions that fall short on their application to the reality of schooling.

Gonzalez calls his second paradigm the radical alternative. This paradigm "disputes the 'well-being' of education and proposes a radical alternative to the existing school system." (1982, p. 29) This position generally argues "that the problem of schooling is that it is unequal, antidemocratic, and functions in an antihumanitarian and repressive manner." (1982, p. 31) Often proponents of this position will argue that these problems are caused by the "dominance within the educational institution of the liberal" paradigm, "the principles of the Taylor factory efficiency system" and that "saving ... the ... dollar is the foremost concern" of the present educational system (1982, p. 31). They argue that "the essence of the educational tragedy ... [is] the inculcation of business values, which superimposed themselves upon the schools and suffocated the possibility for children to learn in a free atmosphere." (1982, p. 32) Finally, the radical school

criticizes the educational institutions as having "incorrect educational policies" (1982, p. 33) because it is dominated by policies of the "elite" and "influencial groups in society." (1982, p. 32)

Hrychuk (1984), Goble (1981,1984), Hurst and Shugarman (1985), van Manen (1980), Toffler (1981), and Larson (1983) typify the radical approach. Hrychuk, in a series of excerpts from his previous articles, makes several insightful comments regarding our educational system. He believed that the dominant mode and content of learning helped to create a "culture of silence" (1984, p. 25) in which students "never raised questions or challenged the existing social reality." (1984, p. 24) He continued this explanation by arguing that "people grow to see themselves through the eyes of their oppressor and describe themselves through his language and point of view." (1984, p. 24) He viewed schools as being able to repress people in this manner or liberate them. The latter could be achieved, in his view, by preparing young people for "participation in democratic society" (1984, p. 22) by being "critically aware." (1984, p. 25)

Goble (1984), like Hrychuk, directly challenges the political role that our schools are playing or are being asked to play in our society. He disagrees with those such as former Alberta premier Peter Lougheed who would develop school curricula to teach the "model of the market economy."

(1984, p. 9) He argues that this is training youth for the business world; youth who will be "developed according to their [the business world's] desires and trained for submission." (1984, p. 9)

Goble argues for an education in which students are "well informed" and "resolved to participate in the decision-making process," where students have a "broad preparation for personal development, for life in a democratic society, for working life and for cultural life." He pointedly recommends teaching "social history, labour history, and current world issues." (1984, p. 10)

Van Manen notes that the main task of the school has been to "indoctrinate our young citizens." (1980, p. 110) He argues that we need to expand the definition of social studies to include social critique. This critique should include an analysis of not only what is, but what ought to be. He argues for an emancipatory pedagogy that would see social critique as:

> a way of life that is committed to pursue emancipatory values and to think deeply about the nature of human misery and the possibility for happiness and community in a world that seems intent on destroying itself (1980, p. 112).

Toffler (1981) presents a veiled threat for the future of our society if the existing, educational ship continues to sail the same course. He believes that schools "simulate the past, not the future" (1981, p. 424) and that we are "producing people who are inadequate and incapable of

coping." (1981, p. 426) Toffler argues that "we are seeing the emergence of an alternative social system... It is this hidden pattern that needs to be grasped." (1981, p. 426) Hurst and Shugarman (1985) also recommend preparation of students for the future. They call for social studies teachers to involve themselves in a revolution in the social studies programs of the schools in preparation for "active citizenship and a democratic world." (1985, p. 149)

The ATA Magazine of May, 1983, presents a number of articles showing concern for youth and their education. In it, Larson makes a strong, radical argument for educational change that:

> schools cannot and should not program merely to insure a better fit between schooling function and social realities. Their role must also include an explicit challenge to undesireable social changes affecting children, while also designing creative mechanisms for those children caught in unsatisfying relationships to rise above their circumstances... The school must creatively review its role in rehabilitation and prevention... They [children] likewise need to understand how negative values like exploitation, manipulation, dishonesty, neglect, abuse, distrust, arrogance, negative attitudes and inequality, among others, influence interpersonal relationships, not to mention relationships between groups and nations (1983, pp. 16-17).

In other words, Larson seems to support the thesis that the purpose of education must go beyond socialization with irrelevant information. He seems to view education as being able to provide people with the knowledge and skills that would give them the confidence and the ability to perform positive and creative functions in society. Larson also

seems to view society as constantly changing and developing. Education could assist people in taking charge of these social transformations.

The point that Larson seems to miss, as have the others from the radical school of thought, is the connection of the educational institutions to the society as a whole. Radical theorists see the possibility of schools being a force independent of the mode of production and being a force that can change society (Gonzalez, 1982). They also incorrectly assume that reform of "the educational system means simply changing those in control of it, without regard to the distribution of property or any other factor relating to the mode of production." (Gonzalez, 1982, p. 34) In analyzing the school problems, radical theorists turn the problem on its head, beginning with the school and arguing how they can change society, instead of analyzing how the society as a whole controls the school.

Gonzalez (1982) describes the third educational paradigm, his vision of Marxist education programs, methods, and systems based upon a characterization of society according to the mode of production existing in it. Throughout history there have been several modes of production. The various modes of production or types of society existing now or in the past are primitive communism, slave society, feudalism, captialism and communism. Each

has had "a particular level of technology and a particular social, or organizational formation." (Gonzalez, 1982, p.11)

Gonzalez (1982) explains that the mode of production has two aspects, the forces of production and the relations of production. The forces of production include the level of use and development of equipment and technology, and "the knowledge, experience, energy, skill, and organization applied by the producers." (Waddington, 1974, pp. 14-15). Gonzalez and Waddington explained further that this mode of production has an accompanying set of relations of production people enter to produce. These are entered independent of human will.

The relations of production in capitalist society can be characterized by two basic classes, the working class which possesses only its ability to work and the capitalist class which possesses the means of production. These social relations correspond to the level of development of the productive forces. The social relations have corresponding institutions and social ideas or an ideology called the superstructure.

The forces of production and the relations of production develop until such time that the relations of production do not allow the forces of production to continue developing and do not allow the productive forces to be fully used (Waddington, 1974, p. 77). The relations of

production must then be changed which may lead to changing the overall mode of production (1974, p. 77).

In capitalist society, the working class sees the results of its labour alienated and does not see an improvement in their living standards because of the out-dated production relations. The working class becomes the force who together with their allies struggle against the relation of production and eventually change the latter (Waddington, 1974, p. 20). This struggle is what Aptheker and LeRoy described as allowing human beings to change and become more human because they are fighting against alienation. Success in changing those production relations would allow people to be successful in totally eliminating alienation.

The state and ruling class regulate the political, social, and ideological ideas and institutions, the superstructure, in the interest of maintaining the prevailing mode of production (Waddington, 1974, p. 77). Waddington argues that, "the ruling class ... control the means of mental production." (1974, p. 86) This control is achieved through the schools which perform an important role in maintaining the existing mode of production and the ideas and other institutions accompanying that mode. Gonzalez lists the following as some of the roles that schools play:

- the state organizes schools to train workers for the economy.

> - the schools propagate the ideological structure prevailing in society, thus legitimizing "the existing class structure" and "the distribution of wealth and political power." (1982, p. 13)

Gonzalez (1982) argues that Marxism is not economically deterministic. He saw an important role, though a secondary role, for ideas and institutions in the relationship discussed to this point. Gonzalez explains that Marx viewed the superstructure as being dominated by the relations of production, yet in turn being able to influence these relations. Gonzalez gives as an example of this relationship, the changes in the capitalist economy which brought about tremendous centralization of production and capital over the last century. These changes also produced contradictions in the social relations causing the massive struggles of workers that were seen around the turn of the century in North America. This challenge to the existing capitalist order brought about the changes in school curricula and organization to the Progressivism of John Dewey.

Gonzalez argues that the purpose of Progressivism was to "steer society away from class conflict" by creating "social harmony, economic stability, and growth" within an "organic, unified, and peaceful society." (1982, p. 29) "Schools," in his view, "are instuments, at once political and social, created for the survival of the social order." (1982, p. 39). They are "moulded" by the needs of a

society. If schools are in crisis, it results from the crisis in the society.

This paradigm views the potential for social and educational reform as being limited by what the capitalist class sees as being necessary to maintain their control (Waddington, 1974, Gonzalez, 1982). Ultimately, they will not allow any reform that threatens this control. Therefore, Marxists view the role of institutions such as the schools as generally conservative as long as the present mode of production is dominant (Waddington, 1974, p. 81). Ultimately, socialism is needed to solve these problems of alienation. LeRoy states in this regard:

> The instrument of liberation will be practice devoted to the construction of the kind of society in which more wholesome relationships to work will prevail (1965, p. 14).

Aptheker makes this comment on this issue:

> Commitment to it [ridding the earth of squalor] overcomes alienation. Success in it eliminates alienation (1965, p. 25).

Gonzalez calls for recognition of the power of the capitalist class. He calls for a struggle on all fronts for the socialist changes that he believes will set the basis for the elimination of the problems not only in our schools, but in society as a whole. He states:

> Struggle for democracy within the schools, offices, and factories is an important tactical part of the process for fundamental social change, but making the schools, offices, or the factories themselves the principal objective can never bring political power and fundamental change. The solution to oppression and

> exploitation (to antidemocracy in general) has as its strategic objective the taking of political power away from the economically dominant class (1982, p. 149).

Thus, this paradigm sees the struggle against alienation in schools as both a struggle for reform and a struggle for socialism.

Morrison (1979) seems to present this view of education. He believes that, in school, students work and that the student can be viewed as a worker. He comments that the problems related to work in school (ie. work motivation and work satisfaction) are part of the "larger societal question involving such issues as job motivation and the structure of human living arrangements." (1979, p. 32) Morrison finalizes his discussion by calling for an analysis of our society and what we want it to be as part of the search for an improved educational system. He states:

> School problems are cultural problems, and, in the final analysis, only serious discussion of the type of society and culture into which we 'graduate' our young will provide an adequate or complete perspective for discussions of change, improvement or equity (1979, p. 36).

These broad labels have some utilitarian value, but for a better understanding of the educational commentators and the direction that educational change is moving in the 1980's in the Western world, a more precise breakdown of educational paradigms is necessary. Therefore, I have added the categories of conservative and neo-Marxist to the list of paradigms that Gonzalez has used. This division of

paradigms is not entirely satisfactory either, because people and literature cannot always be fitted into a mechanical construct.

A fourth educational paradigm is one that has been strongly influencing education in Britain (Holland, 1978; Dakars, 1980; Evans, 1977; Jamieson, 1986; Chanan, 1980), the United States (McConaghy, 1983), and Canada (Green, 1978; Jeffery, 1985; Harrison, 1984; Goble, 1981, 1984) during the late 1970s and the 1980s. This paradigm has been termed the conservative, neo-conservative, or back-to-the-basics movement. It has influenced reforms of education in all three of the above countries in the last ten years and continues to be a major influence of educational reform today. Therefore, my intention is to outline this paradigm by referring to some of the literature discussing educational reform in Britain and Canada during this period.

Dakers (1980) outlined what he understood to be the assumption that motivated the discussion of educational change in Britain begun with the Great Debate in 1976. He explained that teachers got the impression from the debates that the standards in secondary schools had fallen. Dakers stated that the educational reforms were supposed to prepare young people for adulthood and working life. They required young people to have the basics of literacy and numeracy.

However, he also thought that this movement wanted young people to understand "how the country earned its living." (1980, p. 7)

Jamieson (1986) argued that a major assumption underlying the debate and subsequent reforms was that, "...the performance of the economy is significantly affected by the achievements of the education system. It follows that when the economy is in trouble education becomes a prime candidate for blame." (1986, p. 5) He also argued that schools were "detached from the immediate needs of the community." (1986, p. 5) Thus, Jamieson explained that there existed in Britain a feeling amongst some sections of the population that students were "inadequately equipped in terms of skills, knowledge, and attitudes" (1986, p. 5) for the working world.

Evans (1977) stated even more directly what one section of the British population wanted from the educational reforms being discussed in that country. He stated that the Managing Director of Rolls Royce Aero division, Mr. Dennis Head, spoke at a major conference on educational reform. Mr. Head stated British industry desired young people for jobs who had "an understanding of the function of industrial profits." (Evans, 1977, p. 22) At the same time Mr. Head further stated that "he found no evidence to support statements that education standards were falling." (1977, p.22)

Chanan (1980) defined this British educational reform movement as neo-conservative and back-to-the-basics. He explained its purpose as being to "prepare students for work" and to enhance the "productivity" of British industry in the international marketplace. These goals would be met by instituting direct connnections between the classroom and the factory." (1980, p. 7) The plan would be to carry this out by having centralized control over curriculum development and prescribing a core curriculum.

Holland (1978), in describing a reform called the Youth Opportunities Program that arose from the quality of education controversy, argued its logic this way:

> Manufacturing and other industry is rightly concerned about its international competitive position and labour productivity (1978, p. 16).

He also argued that:

> substantial numbers of employers feel that young people are lacking in important respects, amongst them basic literacy and numeracy, general attitude to work and social skills (1978, p. 17).

Therefore, the new program would help young people "by making them more attractive to employers." (1978, p. 17)

In Canada much of the same logic for educational change was used in the discussion of educational reform during the same period of time. Green (1978) argued that the modern, 1970s-1980s, trend of conservatism began as a reaction to the liberal/progressive educational reforms of the late 1950s and 1970s. He argued that they were also a reaction

to the economic problems in North America. He explained that "dollar devaluation, higher inflation, massive unemployment, and huge trade deficits, have hardened the 'humanitarian' attitude of our politicians and economic leadership." (1978, p. 6) Thus, Green feels that the "return to the basics in schools" was a "reactionary" move to maintain "social control" by the capitalist class (1978, p. 6).

Jeffery (1985) and Harrison (1984) argued for the development of basic skills and positive attitudes in students. Jeffery lists as basic skills, "math, languages, the arts, sciences and the social sciences." (1985, p. 38) Attitudes necessary for students are "about working for a company and how the free enterprise system operates" and "company loyalty." (1985, p. 38) Jeffery thought educational reforms were important for students to "understand that the success of a business will, in large part, depend upon their contributions as employees as well as informed consumers and that their output as employees not only contributes to the company's ability to make profits but also ensures continuity of their job and future." (1985, p. 39)

Neo-conservative educational reform has also been advocated for Alberta. In July, 1984, then Premier Lougheed introduced a White Paper entitled "Proposals for an Industrial and Science Strategy for Albertans, 1985 to

1990," In it, he made proposals affecting the education of Alberta students that were similar to those in Britain. He listed as one of his desires to have Alberta students learn "the model of the market economy and its application to Alberta." (excerpted in ATA Magazine, Nov-Dec, 1984, p. 7)

The government and the business sector have in some cases successfully obtained inclusion of this content in school curricula. An example of this inclusion is in the city of Leduc schools:

> In society today we are really at a crossroad. The private enterprise system is being questioned as it never has before. It's incumbent on us to tell our story and get our message across.... The material is approved by the school board and follows the social studies curriculum (Dirksing, 1984, p. 3).

The main question that arises from the conservative reform proposals is: Who benifits from these reforms? The answer to this question is clearly not students from working class families. Instead of education serving to develop the well-rounded individual who can question and participate in society, students would be trained for "submission" (Goble; 1981, 1[illegible]4) at work and to accept their position in society. Thus, corporate productivity will be enhanced; the unemployed and poorly paid will have an adjusted, acceptable, and unquestioning attitude which will allow productivity and corporate profits to increase; and free enterprise societal values will become re-entrenched. The conservative reform proposals will "create an appearance of

order, control, and security" (Goble, 1981, p. 52) for the presently existing society and its benefactors. These requirements will increase the degree of alienation in society, by attempting to maintain or increase the profit levels for the large corporations.

The neo-conservative educational paradigm has an overtly political (Goble, 1981) and ideological bent. This educational paradigm rejects any change that does not benefit the stability of free enterprise society and the ability of corporations to make profit. Change, except in terms of shoring up the status quo in society and defending free enterprise values, is unacceptable. For example, the proposal for teaching labour history in Alberta schools made by the Alberta Federation of Labour to Alberta Education has not been accepted (Labour Federation left out-Aiken. Edmonton Journal, January 22, 1987).

This educational paradigm also reverses the relationship between society and the individual as proposed by the liberal paradigm. There is no concern for the individual except for their utilitarian value or threat to social stability. Goble (1984) states:

> Democracy is not secured by the right to vote. It is secure only when the voters are competent to ask responsible and significant questions (1984, p. 10).

Therefore, Goble indicates that even democratic values are only a political/ideological tool to the conservative paradigm. These values are not above maintaining private

profit and free enterprise society. One can conclude that rather than strengthening the society, in the long run the conservative educational paradigm will weaken the free-enterprise system because alienation will increase in society and in school.

A fifth group of educational pedagogues often label themselves as neo-Marxists and use a Marxist-type of analysis in analyzing the school systems. Paulo Freire describes the possibility of education assisting people to overcome the darkness caused by backward education. He describes a view of people and the physical and social world which is something of a prerequisite to an understanding of the content and methods of education which can result in the development of a liberated people and a dynamic and free society. This view of people and the physical and social world is expressed in this quote from his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

> Animals do not consider the world; they are immersed in it. In contrast, men emerge from the world, objectify it, and in so doing can understand it and transform it with their labour...
>
> ...men's activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis; it is transformation of the world (1970, p. 119).

Freire argues for the potential of a relevant education in the hands of the people. He argues for the possibility of immense human understanding by people who have this relevant education. Finally, he presents a case for the possibility

of humanization of the individual and democratization of society through the process of a relevant education.

Kozal sees students as becoming observers of their social world, rather than actors and transformers. He presents several examples of an alternative to our present systems of education. These are found in his book Children of the Revolution (1978) and in the previously quoted ATA Magazine (1983). In the latter, he discusses one of his experiences while visiting Cuba, which indicates one aspect of an alternative education system.

> In a school outside Havana, in the fall of 1976, I watched a class of third grade children taking small amounts of wooden barrels in one corner of the room, pouring it carefully onto small square pieces of thin cloth or paper, then slowly stitching it together with needle and thread. It was a few minutes before I recognized what they were doing. They were making tea bags!
>
> I discovered that they, along with the other third-graders of Cuba, were producing all the tea bags that would be required in the next year.
> A modest event: 45 minutes out of the full day. The work was not unduly hard, and the children faced no threat of injuring their backs or straining their arms. They simply took a small and seemingly enjoyable role in helping to provide one of the basic needs of their society (1983, p. 19).

These students observed by Kozol are learning to appreciate work that contributes to the development of society. They learn to appreciate work and appreciate being useful participants in social change and development. At the same time, they are viewed by society as being important

and as making an important contribution to a dynamic society. Kozol makes this point as follows:

> All of these efforts are for real; none is a "simulation." Whether it is tutoring in Boston or making tea bags in Havana, the work of these young people is authentic and useful; in every instance, the students come to see themselves as full-scale members and participants of the real political and economic life of their society (1983, p. 19).

Kozol concludes his article by stressing the importance of the contribution that students may make to progress in society. He stresses that students' education can assist them in making real and creative contributions to society. Social problems can be overcome and society can develop if people have the knowledge with which they can perform such tasks. Kozol states:

> They [the children] can also be forces to transform their schools and, with them, the societies in which they live (1983, p. 19).

This transformation, of course, is premised upon an education that deals with the real world, existing social problems, and views man as having the potential to solve existing social problems through changing man, society, and institutions to meet his needs and desires.

One final example of the neo-Marxist analysis of education is used by Ashendon, Connell, Dowsett, and Kessler (1987). These writers believe that the present educational system needs curricular reform. They argue that the present system is maintained through "social power" and "tradition." They recommend that the "hidden constituency" (1987, p. 264)

organize to carry out curricular reform and develop a democratic curricula.

The neo-Marxist paradigm ultimately fails in its conceptualization of the school systems in the same manner as the radical. The neo-Marxists bring into their view of schooling an incorrect view of the role of the mode of production in relation to schools. They fail to realize the power of capitalism and the ruling class, and the manner in which they express that power to control schools. They believe in the independent role of the schools and that the schools can be used to change the society in which we live (Gonzalez, 1982, p. 35).

Steigerwald (1977) analyzes many of the new currents in Marxist thought and comes to many of the same conclusions as Gonzalez. He explains that these theorists often "arrive at a political attitude which is divorced from analysis of the system as a whole." (1977, p. 25) This error in methodology leads this paradigm into divorcing the production relations from the production forces. In addition, the superstructure is dealt with independently of the production forces and the production relations. This leads the theorists of the new-Marxist or critical school to recommend the "reform of consciousness" rather than the reform of society (Steigerwald, 1977, p. 58).

While the schools can be a target of reform, they cannot be reformed without drastically reforming the whole

society. Ultimately, capital, which controls the schools, must be weakened if not eliminated and working class consciousness and organization strengthened before the people will be able to impose radical changes upon schools and society.

Labour Studies. One of the methods of challenging "the culture of silence" imposed on students and beginning the reform of school curricula may be through the introduction of labour studies into school curricula (Coulter, 1979; Morton, 1980; and Fuller, 1981). Coulter repeats the call that she states has been made by the Calgary Labour Council for the inclusion of labour studies in the school curriculum. She criticizes the curriculum for not only lack of any content related to trade unions, but also its failure "to address the realities of the world of work ... such as the boredom of the assembly line and the problems of industrial safety, layoffs, unemployment, [and] sexual harassment on the job." (1979, p. 35)

Morton makes a similar plea for including the study of labour in the curriculum. He argues that in the province of British Columbia "almost half of our students will soon belong to a union" and work will be an important part of students' lives. Therefore "work and class" are "relevant ... to the students' own lives." (1980, p. 24)

Finally, the History and Social Science Teacher (Summer, 1981) devoted much of an issue to the question of labour studies in school. In this issue, Fuller repeats the call for labour studies in school. He gives examples of how the International Woodworkers of America (IWA) has been dealt with in his school in Gibsons, B.C. He also calls for the teaching of a "fundamental part of our heritage" of which "shop stewards, camp committees, grievance procedures, the eight hour day, collective bargaining and trade unions" (1981, p. 223) form an accepted part in society, but neglected part in school curricula.

The introduction of this type of material does not alter the overall structure of society that exists in Canada. This inability of curricula to change society can be seen from the fact that Ontario already has labour studies units (Holmes, 1976) in their curricula. However, this type of material would provide a degree of relevance to the curricula of our schools if introduced and presented from the perspective of organized labour. Gonzalez provides an insight into the importance of an educational reform.

> Struggle for democracy within the schools, offices, and factories is an important tactical part of the process for fundamental social change (1982, p. 149).

Conclusions

Some research and general theorizing has been done on shortcomings of social studies curricula in Canada, England,

and the United States. However, little research has been carried out on the Alberta Social Studies Curriculum. Little research has been published on the biased portrayal of work and workers in our Curriculum.

Although research has been carried out regarding the views of working class children regarding their education, there is a lack of research regarding the views of workers regarding their education and its effect on their work and lives. Specifically, there is a dire lack of research on the question of the meaning that their social studies education has to them.

CHAPTER 3 - CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

Willis and others have outlined how schools prepare students for a world which is very similar to that of the school. Alienation due to class and gender, and resistance exist both in school and out. However, what is being argued here is that alienation is a feature of an unjust, unhumanitarian, and undemocratic society. Therefore, one needs to better understand this situation to be able to change it.

To assist in understanding the alienation of students, one needs to look at it through their eyes. The experiences of students remembering these moments, reflecting upon them, and relating them to their lives today can provide us with an important, new view of schooling.

This experiences of the participants in this study will be interpreted within a Marxist framework. This perspective may offer a better understanding of the schooling process so that the participants and others who read such a study will have the possibility of improving school situations.

This chapter describes the life history approach used to gather recollections of schooling reported in this study. It will then discuss aspects of principles used for conducting interviews through conversations. The third section describes the approach used in interpreting and reporting the participants' recollections of schooling.

This study attempts to apply certain concepts I have drawn from Marxist theory in order to show how school can be an alienating experience for working people. These concepts and their validity are outlined in the fourth and fifth sections of this chapter. The final section of the chapter outlines the procedures used in conducting and interpreting the interviews.

The Life History Approach

The life history approach used in this study is explicitly concerned with giving voice to ordinary people in history. Thompson indicates that research methodology needs to be attentive to whose interests it is serving (1978, p. 96). The inherent interest of this study is to assist workers and other members of the 'culture of silence' to understand their school experience.

The oral history approach suggested by Thompson provides some helpful insights into a methodology for gathering life histories.

> Oral history could bring not only more nuggets of information, but wholly new perspectives - evidence, and also interpretations, from the previously ill represented standpoints of ordinary men, women and children about what they believed had mattered most in their lives (1981, p. 290).

Recording life stories allows workers an actual voice, a personal voice in research and society (Thompson, 1981, p. 289). In studies that use this approach, workers are not

simply a statistic on a graph. Their voice means that the 'culture of silence' imposed upon them by a society that is orienterd towards materialism, individualism, and profits may be changed. It means that another avenue is opened for them to speak to other workers and to society about their problems, interests, and views. Thompson states that in giving people this voice, this approach also gives them confidence in themselves individually and collectively (1978, pp. 14-15). They begin to understand what they are contributing to society through the sale of their labour power. They also learn that they have the ability, the right, and the duty, to contribute more through the expression of their thoughts, views, and ideas.

Thompson views the life history approach to research as setting in motion "a cumulative process of transformation." (1978, p. 7) As people begin to speak more about themselves through research, he views research and history as becoming democratized. This voice can spread to other institutions such as schooling and culture.

Life histories, in the hands of the Marxist historian, may introduce another important dynamic into society. Class consciousness can be increased through workers telling their life histories. This class consciousness could be achieved by introducing these life stories back into society with a synthesis showing the historical movement of social relations (Bertaux, 1981, p. 35). If the concepts make

sense, then people may begin to read this history and act on their situation (Bertaux, 1981, p. 44). Individual alienation is thus overcome as a result of praxis (reflection <-> action) infused with a politically conscious outlook on society. Bertaux indicates that we may also begin to understand the historical movement of "sociostructural relations" (1981, p. 34) through the use of this type of analysis. This understanding may lead not only to minor reforms in society, but may also assist in effecting the kinds of long term changes that will eliminate the alienating society in which we live.

Thompson (1978) states that researchers and the audiences of research may begin to hear voices other than those who have succeeded in society. The younger generation may also hear these voices from the past that have hitherto been unrecorded. Both may begin to hear people speak that have not been understood or valued. The life histories of these people may influence and help transform society for the better.

The approach of recording people's life histories can begin to breathe life back into the stale, irrelevent, mainly political history that has turned off innumerable kids and adults. A natural empathy for the personal situations of people may, if built into the school social studies curricula from the pespective of workers, be a catalyst for a turn around in our 'dead' social studies. As

a minimum, this kind of a change in school social studies courses can mean that students would get involved with those that are deprived, depressed, oppressed, and destitute. This could enhance student understanding of social problems. Action to remediate these problems can be the method whereby these actors overcome their own alienation (Aptheker, 1965, p. 25; LeRoy, 1965, p. 9).

The use of the life history approach in research has a value for the kind of information that can be accessed. As indicated earlier, this approach does not limit itself to gathering information from leaders and successful people. It also considers the people on the bottom of the social, political, and economic scale. In considering, for example, the ordinary worker or farmer as being able to contribute something to social knowledge, new areas are opened to research that were formerly ill considered (Thompson, 1978, p. 6). Opening up these new areas of research may allow researchers to gain new evidence that challenges some of the present interpretations of particular phenomenon. It gives readers a new perspective and therefore a more full and even more realistic picture of events and processes in the past (1978, pp. 5-6).

The picture quality that one gets from life history research is aided by several of its other characteristics. This research methodology contains an inherent sense of time and a coherency (Thompson, 1981, p. 289) that is not common

in quantitative methods. It would seem that both of these are not only valuable but absolutely necessary when seeking to understand human experiences and chart a course for social reform and change.

Finally, Thompson argues that the life history approach is useful because of its flexibility (Thompson, 1978, p. 8). It can get evidence from where-ever it is needed and can be carried out anywhere. For example, schools, museums, and communities may use this approach to study history. It uses a combination of exploring and questioning, thus allowing one to leave no stone unturned in finding evidence. It allows one to seek not only the expected, but the unexpected and use both as evidence.

In conclusion, the life history approach to research is valuable in the sense of who is researched, the kind of knowledge that is sought, and the inherent purpose of the research. It is useful because of the flexibility with which it can be used. The life history research approach needs to be recognized for its potential to provide people with an understanding of the historical movement of social relations and sociostructures. In the hands of scholars who seek socialist societal development, this research method may provide another tool to understand and aid that process.

The Conversational Approach to Interviewing

Conversation was used in attempting to gain some insight into the life history of the participants in this study (see Appendix D). The participants were workers reflecting on their experiences while attending school. Through conversation these experiences were consciously recalled and given retrospective meaning.

Conversational interviews are open-ended, thus allowing for a wide-ranging sharing of experiences. Carson explains that conversation develops through the relating of "examples, ostensive references, and vivid recollections" (1986, p. 9) as the participants seek to understand the experiences.

It is also possible to reflect upon the content of conversations by providing transcripts. This reflection is achieved through a "critical distance" in which the transcript of the previous conversation is submitted to the participant, allowing both the researcher and the participant to reflect on the topics again. Participants in each conversation can reflect on the conversation and, in this sense of standing outside the conversation, can consciously introduce ideas that would generate further recollections.

In the conversational interviews I conducted, reading the transcripts provided the participants with a time for

further reflection and with another opportunity to introduce new ideas into the conversation. Contradictions were focussed on as opportunities to explore some of the contradictions inherent in schooling.

This method of interviewing is attractive because it is a "friendly and natural" (Carson, 1986, p. 10) form of gathering information. It is also rich in quality and quantity of life experiences.

Some caution is necessay when working with this type of research methodology. Carson argues that the question of research ethics is raised more strongly within this mode of qualitative research because the personal nature of gathering information puts the interviewee at a higher degree of risk than may be the case in quantitative research. He indicates that "there is no sharp division between the private and public lives of the participant." (1986, p. 6)

The close contact involved in this research engenders a higher degree of trust. Therefore, there must also be greater awareness of the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the rights of the participants to anonymity, to be fully informed of the nature of the research and to have their consent for release be respected.

Validity in Interpretive Research

Carr and Kemmis indicate that interpretive research views human behavior as understandable once we know the "motives, intentions, or purposes" (1986, p. 88) behind the performance of these actions. The subjective meaning of particular actions develop from routine interpretive activities of members according to public rules which publicly identify these actions correctly. Thus, interpretive research attempts to grasp the subjective meanings of individual's actions which may allow one to uncover the social rules (1986, p. 89). The social rules are uncovered by "making available to the individual actors involved ... the rules and assumptions upon which they are acting" (1986, p. 90) which enlightens them to the importance of their actions.

The principle of maintaining valid interpretations is important for all research. However, qualitative research does not follow the same procedures and routines as quantitative research to obtain validity. For example, qualitative research does not seek the same objective, third-party confirmability. Interpretive research tests for validity in the agreement of meanings given by participants. Interpretive oral history research continually strives for a better interpretation of these meanings by confirming its interpretation time and again with each participant.

The checking and re-checking of interpretation provides for an intersubjective understanding. Unlike quantitative research, interpretive research seeks to gain a deeper understanding of lived experiences of participants rather than seeking to make generalizations about large populations.

Thompson argues for a kind of triangulation among life stories, indicating that they become more "credible when the pattern of evidence is consistent and is drawn from more than one viewpoint." (1978, p. 213) In this respect, the consistency of the viewpoints expressed begins to match explanations of the world with conditions in it. On this point, Thompson states that "the more that an argument can be shown to hold under varying conditions, the more convincing the proof." (1978, p. 213) Carr and Kemmis make a similar point noting that accounts of participants should be coherent (1986, p. 81). They argue that the life history must fit into a consistent framework which would include the evaluative framework of the researcher, other researchers, and participant confirmation.

Thompson cautions researchers to consider that people's memory may be selective, what is remembered is that which was important to the participant. He notes that the selectivity of memory is probably no worse than the selectivity that exists in written documents, but one should keep this in mind in evaluating the reliability of evidence.

Related to this aspect of reliability, Thompson also suggests the need to watch for a conflict of values in recollected experiences. He explains that the researcher needs to evaluate whether the person is really telling you what they recall, or if the conflicting values reflect social changes that have influenced the subsequent thinking of the participant (Thompson, 1978, p. 210).

Recollected experiences in this study should take into consideration the context in which the experiences are being interpreted. They should be measured against a wider context by taking into consideration such things as "time, place, and social class." (Thompson, 1978, p. 211) Thompson suggests that indications of problems could be "the absence of reliable detail, anachronistic attitudes, and incongruous linguistic phrasing." (1978, p. 211)

Classical Marxist Theory

Classical Marxist theory views the world around us as existing independent of our consciousness (Burns, 1966, p. 90). Burns also argues that this theory views the world as governed by laws which people can discover and use (1966, pp. 90-91). Human activity allows us to identify these laws which are scientific because they are based on reality. Burns explains that these laws and our ideas of the world are a product of observing, acting, and changing the

objective world. These laws are the materialist aspect of the Marxian dialectical materialist view of the world.

Classical Marxism views these general laws regarding the existence of nature as also being applicable to society. This application is called historical materialism. It argues that people make history through their conscious actions (Politzer, 1976, pp. 120-121). These actions are "according to their will, which is the expression of their ideas. The latter are derived from their material conditions of existence, ie., their membership in a class." (Politzer, 1976, p. 130)

Burns (1966) and Politzer (1976) outline the four dialectical materialist principles of Marxism. The first principle is that "nothing in the world is really static, that everything is moving, changing, either rising and developing or declining and dying away." (Burns, 1966, p. 93) Politzer (1976) explains that motion occurs in two different ways. Motion is a result of "autodynamism, which means a force which comes from the being itself." (Politzer, 1976, p. 96) Motion may also occur as a result of an imposition of a change in the process or reality from outside. Motion achieved through this imposition is mechanical rather than an autodynamic.

The second principle of the dialectical method is that things are interdependent, "everything influences everything else." (Politzer, 1976, p. 99) Therefore, as people change

one aspect of society through their actions, this change has consequences for other aspects of society. For example, the alienation existing in society is linked to that existing in schools.

Politzer argues that our society is "a complex of processes" (1976, p. 100) that are generally always developing society and that need to be studied to understand society. They occur in a sequence that brings society back to the starting point as they develop. However, these processes move in a spiral so that the starting point to which the spiral returns is always a new and higher position. Politzer comments that,

> history shows us that time does not go by without leaving any traces. Time passes, but the same developments do not return. The world, nature and society constitute a development which is historical, a development which, in philosophical language, is called "spiral." (1976, p. 103)

Burns explains that for this reason, it is important to recognize the stage of development of the phenomenon being analyzed and not to react mechanically to things (1966, p. 94). As an example, one could make an analysis of Canadian society and conclude that Canadian workers are not yet ready to have an education system such as exists in socialist countries such as Cuaba, China, or the Soviet Union because our society has not achieved the necessary stage of development.

The third principle of dialectical materialism is that quantitative changes accumulate and become qualitative changes (Burns, 1966, p. 95; Politzer, 1976, pp. 117-120). For example, if enough heat is put to water, the water becomes steam. If alienation in society continues and increases, people will resist and rebel against the cause of this alienation in an ever stronger manner. The eventual result of quantatative increases in alienation and responses of people resisting and fighting against alienation would be a succession in the character of society.

The final aspect of dialectical materialism is that development occurs as a result of everything containing conflicting contradictions or opposites (Burns, 1966, pp. 96-97; Politzer, 1976, p. 106-111). This conflict allows the emergent force, the opposite to eventually supersede and replace the dominant force. Thus, Marxism posits that the contradictions between what people want and desire in school and what and how they are taught will eventually be eliminated. The emerging working class in capitalist society are struggling to improve the institutions that reinforce alienation in our society. However, the contradictions between the level of development of the production forces and the production relations are causing increasing alienation. This increase in alienation will eventually allow the emerging working class to see that it must replace the dominant capitalist class and change the

institutions such as the schools so that they will mirror the interests of the new, dominant class.

The Marxist view that society is constantly moving, changing, and full of contradictions necessitates the need for constant analysis of social phenomena to understand them. Therefore, Marxists continually re-examine phenomena to see what changes have occurred so as to understand these changes. Marxism attempts to show how the particular aspect of society is developing and changing so as people who are part of the emerging force in society, the working class and their allies, will understand these changes, take control of them, and direct changes toward their own ends. Thus, Marxism is important as a guide to action which when filled in with current experiences and applied to conditions existing at the time will allow working people to develop their institutions and society as a whole according to their will.

Politzer (1976) outlines five steps of a Marxist analysis that were generally used in this study. The first step is to "pay attention to the content of the ...story you wish to analyze." (1976, p. 150) He suggests making a summary of the subject under analysis and noting anything remarkable. The second step is to observe the "social types," the "class" (1976, pp.150-151) to which people belong. He suggests examining the actions of these people to see if they can be linked to a social viewpoint. The

third step is to consider the means of production and the way of producing at the time when the story takes place. In my case it has been noted that we live in a capitalist society. The fourth step is to look at "the ideology...the ideas, and feelings, the way of thinking" (1976, p. 151) of the participants. The final step is to analyze the story according to why it happened at that time. Politzer concludes that with this method we try "to see things in their motion, in their changes, in their contradictions and in their historical significance and not in a static, immobile state. We must try to study them as well in all their aspects and not unilaterally." (1976, p.151)

The Marxist analytical method was used in this study because of its potential to understand the contradictions existing in schools in the form of workers' alienating experiences. Also, it was used because of its potential to place these experiences within a social context and therefore understand the interdependence between them and society. Marxism posits that changes have occurred in the education system and will continue to occur. These changes will of necessity come from the emergent force within our society, the working class and allies of the working class who continue to suffer from alienation. The Marxist method of analysis is used to discover the features of school alienation and possible changes that can be made in school

organization, curricula, and teaching materials as part of a program to overcome this situation.

Validity in Marxist Theory

Validity in Marxist theory is concerned with the application of critical insights to social change. Marxism tests the discoveries that are made about people's actions in human experience. Burns comments that Marxism "tests all its discoveries, all its conclusions, by actual experience, rejecting or modifying conclusions and theories which, to use the simplest phrase, do not fit the facts." (1966, p. 92)

Marxism also recognizes that "knowledge is always growing and developing." (Cornforth, 1963, p. 160) As knowledge grows in width and depth, we must always re-evaluate our conclusions about a particular phenomenon. Cornforth concludes that "we must be prepared to recognize that all knowledge is always limited, incomplete, defective, and so requires not only supplementation but also criticism in order to carry it forward and advance to new conquests." (1963, p. 162)

Valid interpretations are a guide to understanding human action in the past and also serve as a potential guide to human action in the future. In the case of this study, life histories also posit a praxical (reflection <-> action) relationship between life stories and the participants as a

form of validity. Bertaux states that "everybody can read life stories and appropriate for himself the bits of knowledge that each one contains." (1986, p. 44) Ultimately, if meanings are appropriated by us and are shown to be the case through our actions, then they have achieved a form of validity.

Thompson assumes that life histories have a social validity. He argues that they implicitly contain a dynamic by developing social consciousness which leads to action.

> History... is part of the way in which the living understand their place and part in the world... By helping to show how their own stories fit into the changing character of the place in which they live, their problems as workers or as parents, history can help people to see how they stand, and where they should go (1978, p. 225).

There is a form of validity for life histories which go beyond the subjective realm of the participants. The Marxist view looks at interpretations as being valid if they contribute to people understanding schooling, its role, and its relationship to society (Gonzalez, 1982, p. 29). The Marxist interpretation of life storiis analyzes human activity to uncover the laws of change and development (ie. to obtain knowledge). These experiences are used to formulate a scientific theory to understand and influence that change and development in a direction that is favourable to the working class. If conclusions about the life histories are correct, then these histories have the

understanding of schooling, reforms necessary and possible to give working class children a better education, and advance society towards socialism.

Conducting the Research

Selecting the Participants. During the course of the summer of 1984 to the summer of 1985, I interviewed three people from unions under the umbrella of the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL), concerning their schooling. My intention was to have them share recollections of their schooling experience. Because I was interested in applying a Marxist interpretation to these recollections, I selected active union members as participants. I felt that workers who are organized into unions would likely have reflected upon their schooling experiences and would be able to provide critical insights into the process of schooling. I suspected that these individuals would have experienced problems of motivation and/or alienation in school, and would have had a degree of consciousness as to why they had found themselves in this situation.

Consideration was also given to thge following factors in selecting the participants for this study:

i) representation of public and private sector unions.
ii) their educational background (ie. that these individuals have been educated in Alberta).

The people interviewed were known to me from my work, political involvement, or were referred to me by acquaintances.

The First Interview. The participants were initially contacted by telephone to determine their interest and to find out whether they met the qualifications previously listed. In some cases possible participants were rejected because they had not been educated in Alberta. Each participant was given a letter that described the project and formally requested their participation (see Appendix B).

The interviewee chose the place for the conversation. It always took place in their home, at their place of work, or in my home. The interview was taped in a session of approximately one hour. A general list of preliminary topics was developed by me (see Appendix C) which served simply as a facilitator or springboard for the interviews. This list was added to and taken from as the interviews proceeded and developed. This flexibility provided the freedom for the participants to pursue the discussion of the topic and allowed each participant to come to a better understanding of our education system.

The interviews with Ann took place in her living room. We met for the first time on July 8, 1984. The first interview was very tense and both the participant and I were

about being taped. A general discussion during set up about the research project and current events assisted in relieving some of the tension. The first interview was very much of a question-answer approach. After the interview, we sat down to tea and a futher discussion of work, politics, and other mutual interests.

Creation of the Transcript. The first interview was selectively transcribed onto paper by myself. Topics that discussed contradictions between what was taught and how it was taught, and the needs and desires of the participant, or other significant memories were selected for transcription. A written copy of the interview was given to the interviewee before the next session.

An analysis of the interview was undertaken after each session by me. This analysis was carried out with the intent of providing a summary of the previous interview and a modified list of topics to guide the next interview. This list included topics that were discussed in the previous interview, but lacked clarity, needed elaboration, or needed modification. It also included topics that seemed contradictory and topics that were in the original list that had not been discussed. Together the transcript and the modified list of topics provided the participant and me with an opportunity to reflect on the topics and the transcript,

and to come to a better understanding of our education system.

Interpreting the Transcripts. Time was provided for the participant and me to read, reflect upon, and further analyze the conversation by establishing the next interview several days or weeks later. The reflection and analysis was aided by having the transcript and modified list of topics in the participant's hands before the next interview.

Clarification, elaboration, modification, and questions, if desired by the participant or me, became a part of each successive session. This flexibility was important since not all aspects of the story were related or understood at the time or upon reflection. Differences in viewing and/or understanding a particular experience or topic were analyzed at the successive session. Thus, a maximum clarity and understanding of each of the experiences was allowed for in this method of research.

Subsequent Interviews. The remainder of the interviews with Ann occurred during the summer of 1984. Each of the interviews, transcribing of interviews, and development of a modified list of topics for the next interview followed the same procedure as the first interview. The second interview began in much the same question-answer approach as the first. However, after a while the participant and I became less nervous, more sure of the procedure, and focussed more

on the relating of the life story. A conversational format became established.

Prior arrangements for the first interview with Don followed the same procedure as with Ann. The first interview with Don took place on August 9, 1984 in his office. Again, the participant was unsure about what was desired and therefore the direction to take in the conversation. This situation was more quickly resolved with this participant because of a greater degree of understanding on my part as to the procedure to follow in collecting the life story.

The same procedures were used in this conversation as with the conversations with Ann. However, the second conversation did not take place with Don until December 8, 1984. This occurred because Don had a heavy schedule of work with a strike on his hands and then went on holidays. Also, I began a new school year in a new school. The remainder of the conversations with Don took place during December, 1984. The second and fourth conversations occurred in his home and the third in mine.

After discussion with another person who had just completed their Master's Degree and had had their interviews professionally transcribed, I decided to follow this course. After receiving the transcript from the company that transposed the interview, I checked the transcript for accuracy and made any corrections of content necessay. I

followed the procedure of writing a topic list that could be pursued in the next conversation. A copy of the transcript and the topic list were given to the participant before the next interview.

My third series of interviews with Ron began on July 6, 1985. I followed the same procedure prior to beginning the first conversation as with the other participants. Ron also began the first conversation in the same uncertain manner as had the other participants. As the conversations progressed, this uncertainty decreased. I followed the same method of conversation transcription and preparation for the subsequent conversation with Ron as I had with the last three conversations with Ron. The other conversations took place during the remainder of July, 1985. All conversations took place in the staffroom of the school in which Ron worked.

Upon completion of the interviews, I analyzed the transcripts. The facts of the life story were drawn from the interviews. These facts were checked for reliability and accuracy based upon my knowledge of history and society. The life stories were written in a chronological fashion. They were rewritten many times to provide the clearest possible portrayal of their schooling experiences. These life stories were returned to the participants for confimation of accuracy and validity. Each agreed that the life stories were accurate and valid.

The synthesis of the life stories provided examples of answers to the questions of this study. This synthesis together with the conversations and the time spent reflecting on schooling allowed the participants and the researcher to come to a better understanding of our school experiences. Don, for example, made this conclusion at the end of our fourth conversation.

> The one thing that I want to comment on is that I have told you things that I didn't know I knew. Because you've made me think about it [schooling], I think that tells me as well that other people feel the same way, that it can happen to them. I guess part of experiential learning might even be an interview such as this because its been an experience for me. I guess it's even given me some insights into what's happening [in schools] (2-4-14).

Conclusion

The essence of this study was to question the nature of the educational experience of the involved workers. I was motivated to find how workers understood this experience, and how the workers viewed this experience then and views it now. I was not looking for quantifiable results, but human thoughts and feelings.

This research used an interpretive life history method of interviewing to record the life stories of workers. These experiences as related, discussed, and reflected upon are presented in Chapter 4. From these conversations emerged a deeper understanding of the essence of workers' school experiences. These stories are analyzed in Chapter 5

using an interpretive paradigm to inform a Marxist approach. In turn, this study gives one the opportunity to gain insight into this aspect of the human condition with an eye to understanding, change, and remediation.

CHAPTER 4 - WORKERS' PERSPECTIVES OF THEIR EDUCATION

This chapter turns to the central focus of this study, workers' views of their educational experience. It documents the life history of workers focusing on their school experience; it portrays how each of the workers, in reflection, understood their school experience; and it highlights what relationship this experience has had for the worker today. This chapter begins the process of interpretation of the schooling experiences of these workers.

The life stories are organized chronologically and through the use of general topic headings. This method of organization is used to preserve a flow in the stories as they developed in depth and breadth. In addition, pertinent quotes are used to both give an original flavour to the story and to use the participants' own words to make or back up a point.

This chapter features the life stories of three workers which were recorded between July, 1984, and July, 1985. The conversations, the first stage of interpretation, are joint projects of each of the participants coming together in conversation with myself to attempt a sense-making of personal educational experience. Chapter 5 will be the next stage of this process. In Chapter 5, these experiences will be interpreted taking into consideration my experiences, the

literature reviewed, and the experiences of the participants in these conversations.

Ann Hall

> I don't think that school influenced my life. I think I did that myself because I think I'm a curious person. I've always wanted to learn, so I've gone on my own and learnt, you know. Like I read an awful lot, always have (1-1-3).

I had met Ann Hall several years ago while working on a campaign sponsored by a civic reform organization. I knew she worked for the government and, consequently, was a member of the government employees' union. I telephoned Ann early in July, 1984, explained my study, and asked her to participate. She readily agreed. I sent Ann a formal letter describing the project and requesting her participation. I also sent her my Outline of Specific Research Questions (see Appendix C).

We met for the first time early in July. Subsequent meetings were every one or two weeks during July and August, 1984. They lasted approximately one hour. We talked about various educational issues, however we sometimes discussed other current events items before and after the taped conversations. All meetings took place in Ann's living room.

Our first conversation covered a lot of ground. The discussion centered around several initial topics to which we often returned in later conversations as we pursued our mutual interest in school experiences and developed our understanding of them. The topics became woven together in

the four conversations. Concurrently, there was an emergence of new topics in each conversation. Therefore, a momentum developed as each of us sought to understand our school social studies experiences and the relationship of these experiences to our lives.

—Our first conversation was scheduled for a summer evening, early in July. I arrived at Ann and husband John's house at the appointed time. John met me at the door and invited me into their living room. A while later, Ann arrived from her regular aerobics class.

A few minutes alone in the living room, before the first conversation got under way, allowed me to peruse the family library. As I surveyed the book collection, I noticed that they were primarily Canadian, historical literature. When Ann returned, she pointed out that this was her major interest.

Ann and I began our first conversation a few minutes later. Both of us were nervous. The first conversation began as a question/answer approach, each participant asking and answering questions. We discussed various Canadian historical events and how most people lacked a knowledge of these things. Ann described some historical events that she had discovered through personal reading. Our mutual interest in Canadian history set the tone for our conversation. As time went by, we both relaxed and our conversations developed a natural momentum.

> I have my own mind and I refuse to have anybody take it away from me, you know. And the education system can do this (1-1-20).

Recalling Her Own Student Days. Ann was born in 1935 and began school in 1940. She attended Prince Phillip School until grade 5. After this, the boundary system, which put the school boundary down her back alley, forced her to go to Princeton School. She remembered Prince Phillip School as the place where many of her friends were and where the people who she felt she could relate to were left when she changed schools. She felt that the students in her first school "were pretty well all in the same ...financial ... level;" (1-1-6) it was "more the working class school." (1-1-6) Leaving this school was "very traumatic" (1-1-8) for her.

Ann described Princeton School, which she attended for grades 5 through 9, as being a school attended by many children from elite families. Attending this school were "doctors' children, and lawyers' children, professors' children ... [children of] all these big name people living there." (1-1-6) The children from these more affluent families were in the majority in this school and stuck together in their own cliques. On the other hand, those like her that came from the East end of the boundary also continued to stay together.

Ann explained that "you just didn't mesh with them [the upper class students] at all." (1-1-8)

> It seemed to be that gap. As you left school and went into your area, you didn't come back again, you know. So you stuck with the kids in that neighborhood (1-1-8).

Consequently, Ann found this social situation difficult.

Ann moved to her third school which was just "around the corner" (1-1-7) from where she had just moved. She attended this school during 1950-51 for grade 10 - her last year in school. This school had a mixture of students from different economic backgrounds. Because she was "more accepted" (1-1-9) in Beacon Hill School, she enjoyed it more. Although kids stayed in the area they came from, Ann felt that in this school "you're getting back into ... your own financial class." (1-1-9) She made friends with other students from her new neighborhood who remain her friends today. At the same time, students who were from elite cliques stayed together.

Ann felt a family's social and economic background was important for children at this time. Ann's father was a supervisor with the CNR. Her mother was a dressmaker/designer by trade, however she worked in a meat-packing plant. It was a struggle for Ann's parents to feed and clothe three children. The family did not have money for store bought clothes and holiday excursions. Ann explained how her parents' economic status affected her when she went to school and how this eventually contributed to her deciding to quit school. She stated:

> Teenagers like nice clothes and there were fads then as there are today and they couldn't afford the fads any more than I could. But it's hard for a teenager to understand, you know. But even having a fad gives the person confidence - you know a little more confidence. I could have probably fought all this had I been able to do the things the other kids could do and had the clothes and go where they went, you know. Like on summer holidays, they would all go someplace (1-2-5).

Ann noticed discrimination in school, based on family economic and social status. She saw children from well-to-do families receiving recognition and encouragement in class, which she didn't get.

> I remember in Algebra having my hand up for a whole class, and there wasn't one person, and no one else, had their hand up. And my math teacher, finally at 5 minutes before the bell rang, asked me for the answer and I gave it to him. And I decided that day I was going to be determined. I knew the answer and I knew how to get it. So I stood up and I gave him the answer and he put it on the board. But he didn't give me any recognition for it. He just said, "I'm impressed, Bill [refering to another student from a wealthy family], that you didn't get this." (1-1-18)

Ann felt an especially deep sense of frustration over this issue. She related another experience when she was directly snubbed by a teacher. This experience took place when she was in grade eight.

> They put on a play and it was an Edmonton wide thing. And I was one of the main characters in the play. I was really good at drama. So they, what they did was they, because of there were two grade 8 classrooms, they decided to split the cast into two groups. So there were actually two groups doing the same play. So we would play them on alternate days for a week. And I happened to be the bad fairy.
>
> So when the , The Edmonton Bulletin and The Edmonton Journal did a review on this, they came on the night that I was acting and I had my name put in the paper plus the picture of myself. And there was a nice

> article on my acting ability. And then they had all these pictures and there was a picture of myself, individually, plus all the rest of the cast.
>
> So when I went back to school on the Monday, course I was thrilled to death, I mean a child in grade 8 seeing their name in lights, that was fantastic. And this teacher had every article that had appeared in both papers about the other students, but not me. He had actually clipped my picture off and taken that article. The other classrooms all had it, but he didn't. He deliberately took that out. I walked into his room and looked and it was gone. I mean that man was cruel. John had the same teacher. He hates him to this day (1-1-19).

Ann liked some of her teachers; however, she felt that generally they didn't encourage her to achieve. When she did achieve, she felt they reinforced it in a negative manner. An example of this situation had to do with an I.Q. test that Ann completed as a shy, fourteen-year-old who was taught to respect one's elders.

> There would be times when you wanted to say something and, you couldn't. As a matter of fact, I remember my, my English teacher when she gave us our I.Q. tests... I remember her coming up to me and she was very, very amazed because she said she had not expected my I.Q. to be at the level it was at. You know, that's always bothered me, that particular statement (1-1-5).

Ann was also frustrated at the lack of ability to talk to and discuss things with teachers. They simply did not answer questions raised by students. In fact, the opposite was usually the case. Ann felt that teachers usually expected students to think what they were told to think. She refused to accept this state of affairs and outlined her reasons for this:

> These were human beings like myself, you know, whose, actually whose education level was no higher actually than myself. Because at that time they had to complete grade 11 and then go to Normal School for a year and then they got their Teaching Certificate. So they really weren't that far ahead of myself, you know. And they were trying to tell me to accept their ideas. And because they were older than I was and I had to respect my elders, I had to accept those ideas as being gospel and live my life accordingly. And I wasn't prepared to do that as I'm not prepared to do it today (1-1-20).

On the other hand, Ann saw teachers encourage and reinforce students who came from well-to-do families. Ann commented on this situation and described how teachers responded to some of these students:

> There's alot of snobbery and I, and I think this, this happens today too. The teachers are influenced by the money.... I think that had alot to do with it. How they addressed the kids was depending on who they were and who their parents were. C____B___ was a very popular girl with the teachers. She was not that popular with the students. Not that I'm saying she wasn't a nice girl She was a very nice girl. But let's face it, their family had money. They had B____ Lumber....
>
> You're dealing with kids and those who are professors at the University. Their kids went there and certainly they got the attention (1-1-9,10).

Ann remembered the encouragement of students also varied when future occupations were considered. Students from well-to-do families were pointed in the direction of university with these comments:

> "You'll be successful. I want to see you go to university. You've got a real good head on your shoulders. You'll really achieve alot." (1-3-6)

Ann voiced her view of these comments by stating that, "those statements were pointed to the kids who could well

afford to go to university." (1-3-5,6) Meanwhile, her father, "could not put [her] through university." (1-3-5,6)

On the other hand, students from working class backgrounds were encouraged to get "...clerical jobs, ... typing, [and] bookkeeping..." jobs (1-3-7); if they were encouraged at all.

Ann related a story to show how the discrimination against students in class also extended to students treatment of each other. Some of the children abused other children who had a lower social and economic status. One group of boys became "untouchables" because they were living in "houses that weren't theirs" below the bridge. No one would even go over to talk with them.

> They were dirt poor kids and you know what, those kids didn't stand a chance. They would come over the hill and into the schoolgrounds and they got stoned. I tell you, they were ripped apart (1-1-22).

Later, Ann elaborated on the situation of these students, particularly about them being "stoned:"

> I don't mean that they got stoned by rocks. I mean they were just- no one played with them, literally, they didn't belong to any clique, they were totally loners, they were just invisible, is all I can say. Totally ignored by the teachers as well as the students. I used to feel really sorry for them, but then again there was some peer influence there that if you did go over and try and talk to them you were placed in the same bracket, and you sort of sat on the sidelines and wondered what would happen to them eventually (1-2-1).

Ann also remembered how the school treated those students:

> They were victims of all sorts - anytime that anything went missing, they were hauled into the Principal's office. There was no question. It had to be them (1-1-24).

At that time, Ann noted another aspect of discrimination in school, according to ethnic background. She also noted that religion and even skin colour was important. You had to be light skinned. Ann's father was of Romanian descent. Although Ann never learned the language or customs, she did inherit the dark complexion. Ann commented on these aspects of discrimination:

> you just weren't accepted unless you were English, Scotch , or Irish and unless you came from Texas. I say Texas because one girl happened to come up. Her name was D___ and she came up from Texas and everybody loved her, and loved her all the time she went through Princeton School... I didn't have a "ski" at the end of my name. So you can imagine those people that did (1-1-17).

Ann felt discriminated against by teachers as a non-Anglo-Saxon, working class woman. She viewed teachers as preparing her for a role in society that was in accordance with these characteristics.

Ann felt that she did not have the 'correct' characteristics as seemed to be required by the teachers. She remembered being asked if she was a native due to her dark skin colour, or if she was adopted because her sister had lighter coloured skin. She felt, at times, as if she was "treated like a native." (1-1-24)

Ann felt that she was being directed by the teachers towards a station in life which had much less status than what she thought should have been the case.

> I would like to meet some of them [teachers], particularly now when I'm in my position ... and say, "OK, look it. Regardless of what you thought, here I am and relatively successful at this point in my job. I'm certainly listened to, you know, so that if I suggest programs and changes in the system, they listen and they do the changes - they're very valid ... I would like to [see them] not out of bitterness. But I would just say to them, "Well, here you are. You were not encouraging at the time. You thought I would end up a nothing, and here I am." (1-2-2)

Ann described how society and school as a whole discriminated against woman by trying to direct her to a particular role. Few jobs and professions were open to women when she was leaving school. There was an expectation by society and taught by the school of things a woman should do and know. She was taught that:

> a girl was expected to get out of school, get married, have children, and look after her husband (1-1-3).

Also, household duties were to be done by the woman.

> Because you were a girl, you had to take Home Ec. and learn how to make a bed and set a table properly. I hated that (1-1-22).

At the same time, Ann remembered the males in the class being encouraged to get careers.

> I remember them [teachers] dealing mainly with the fellows in the group. Like in class, they would be more receptive to their ideas than they were to the girls', for example ... they just didn't feel that girls would ever go into careers. And if you look back yourself in history, this is true (1-1-4).

Ann focused on one of her most notable recollections of schooling, the destruction of her confidence in herself.

> I mean, if you don't go in there feeling good about yourself, you're not going to achieve. You know, I'm sure you've experienced that. If you have something on that you don't feel comfortable with you're always very conscious of it; and, therefore, you don't have a high profile. You try and get yourself in a corner, you know, and hide (1-2-11,12).

She described many levels of this loss of confidence as she described her schooling.

Ann felt she was very studious in school. She received very good marks in her early school years, but already in her early grades her confidence in herself being able to achieve was being eroded. This loss of confidence is illustrated in the incident when Ann's teacher told Ann that her I.Q. score was higher than she, the teacher, had expected. Ann's response to this was, "Gee, maybe I'm smarter than I think I am." (1-1-5)

Ann consciously sought to do things her own way. She enjoyed school subjects such as art, French, English, and music because she <u>was</u> able to express herself and be creative. As a curious person who sought answers for many questions, she found school very stifling. She frequently referred to it as not making her a "free-thinking person." (1-1-13)

Sometimes Ann actively resisted conforming to the expectations of the teachers and the school system

generally. She recalled one incident from her home economics class:

> I had to make a pair of pajamas. So I made a pair of pajamas with short legs because everybody else made them with long legs. Isn't that awful? And they made me model them in front of all the parents cause they were the first short...pajamas. Isn't that terrible? You know, I think back, I must have caused some concern. I just refused to make them with long...
>
> We all had to make an apron, and all had to be the same apron with the same pocket with the same design. (1-1-22)

Ann also pointed out an example of a younger sister who lost confidence in herself, dropped out of school, and is now a poverty stricken, single parent who, "cannot look after herself and her children [and] ...doesn't realize her potential." (1-2-11,12)

Ann found that she could no longer stand school. At a later age and especially in high school, she often skipped school. Finally, she dropped out.

> I gained my self-confidence actually by getting out of school; by learning I could do things on my own. I didn't have to take that garbage (1-2-7).
>
> I was determined I was going to do without their help (1-1-19,20).

Life After School. Ann now reflects back on her dreams and aspirations as a child.

> I even attempted to write a book when I was 12. And it was called, The House of Jalna. And apparently there is such a place down East. I wasn't aware of this until I went down there. But I did try to write a book

> when I was that young. I think I got one scribbler full and lost it. ...I always wanted to be a writer or a journalist for some reason, you know. But no one was ever there to encourage a person to go that way (1-1-3).

Ann quit school so that she would not be restricted by it any further. She dropped out of school to pursue her interests in other things and to find her own place in society. She viewed getting out of school as having been a positive thing that actually helped her in life.

After leaving school, Ann worked in a drugstore. She got married and stayed at home for a number of years while she raised a family. When her first husband got sick and died, she got a job in a department store because this is all she thought she could do. She eventually went on to the job she has had with the government for the past 14 years. She considers this job as beyond what she would have achieved had she stayed in school.

Later, Ann returned to formal studies to further her education. She completed correspondence courses in English, psychology, and sociology. She excelled in all of them. She prides herself on having achieved the status of supervisor in her department. She enjoys her work and feels fulfilled by it. Today, Ann feels like a confident individual who continues to consciously organize her life to be socially aware.

Ann has seen many of her classmates going through the same process as she did, but not having been able to achieve

in life. Many of the kids from her neighborhood also quit school, but achieved only that for which they had been prepared and told to strive. Ann commented on her friends achievements in life and whether continuing with their schooling would have changed their lives:

> Perhaps schooling would have helped them. I don't know because in most of the cases, now, they're all doing exactly what they did thirty years ago. They're still married, still going to bingo games, still relying on their husbands to think for them, and you know, living in their little worlds and you can't really relate to them (1-2-8).

Ann feels that these women did go back to take secretarial-type courses at college and that, if they had stayed in school, they "...might have been able to...[feel] more comfortable in the workplace, in the work force." (1-2-8)

On the other hand, she explained that students from well-to-do families often were successful in the manner that they defined the word.

> Believe it or not, alot of them are big names today... they have been, at least by my interpretation, successful as per the school, what the school was hoping for...
>
> I'm talking about status, you know, work. They sit in corporations and lawyers and doctors and owning businesses and things like this (1-3-8).

> "[School is] not teaching the kids the real issues, the things that are important, the things that affect other people." (1-4-8)

> The teaching is over my head because to me it's not realistic (1-4-14).

Reflections on Schooling. Ann quit school in 1951 after grade 10. She said:

> I didn't complete high school. I don't think [I quit] because I wasn't capable of completing it. It was a case of, I wasn't really interested in what they had to say (1-1-1).

Schooling did little, in Ann's view, to prepare her for real life or to have explained real life to her. She feels that school was not giving her the important knowledge that she pursued in her reading.

> Well, if you look at my books - history again, which is kind of odd because they're all non-fiction. Like, I just can't get involved with fiction; maybe, that had something to do with; maybe, I felt school was like a fantasy. It just wasn't a real world you know. I don't know for sure, but thinking back now, it was like living in a movie or something. Everybody was playing a role and I just didn't have a role to play (1-2-3).

She explained the contradiction between what she disliked about school (ie. English history) and what she liked to read now (ie. history).

> I wasn't interested in that type of thing. I knew nothing of England. I'm interested in what happened here in Canada. You know, what happened right here; how we came to be; what happened to our natives; their story of how they felt about the whites coming in and taking over their land; what happened during the different wars; how the immigrants got here; what happened to them during the depression; what happened during that era; who suffered; who gained. You know, things like this. That was too far from home. I couldn't relate to the Black Plague, unfortunately (1-2-3).

Ann explained that, when she went to school, students were taught very little about Canada, Canadian history, or

social issues in Canada and around the world. Instead, they were given useless information to memorize such as lists of dates and leaders. She strongly objected to an education that dealt mainly with the United States and England, particularly English history. She stated that this began to turn her off:

> I mean who wants to study... ancient history, English history. I didn't know England. I'd never been there. I could care less about it. (1-1-13).

Ann felt that people were unprepared for the future because they had not learned relevant information. People weren't prepared to handle changes in their personal lives and in society. She explained that people today have to deal with many of the same things that happened in the past. Therefore, people should have been taught how people in the past dealt with things like a recession and depression. People would then be more prepared to cope with their situation.

Looking back, Ann saw people leaving school and not being educated to be socially and politically conscious and humanitarian in nature. They didn't know about the things taking place around them or things that had taken place in the past that might affect them now or in the future. Neither did they know what the causes of these things were. She discussed how at work, now, she would talk about the National Farmers' Unions' Kraft boycott, the United States Farm Workers' grape boycott, or the problem of women in the

Third World using Nestle's Milk. Her co-workers didn't know anything about these things.

Ann believes people today do not care about many of these issues and problems because the education system did not teach this. She thought that the objective of the education system, when she went to school, was not to develop "free-thinking" people. Instead, she said, "...they're making the human being into a robot. We're a bunch of robots walking around." (1-4-8)

Ann viewed the changes in schooling from her time to now as important. Today, students have the ability to express themselves to teachers. In addition, there is more Canadian content and teachers are beginning to raise issues in class such as the issue of nuclear war.

At the same time, the situation seems not to have drastically changed for working class kids. Ann discussed how the discrimination against them continues today, in much the same manner, as when she went to school. User fees restrict students from under-privileged families from participation in some activities. Also, these students cannot afford to buy a calculator or computer that would allow them to develop their skills to their full potential. Private schools often provide a better education for the elite. Bigger schools in wealthier parts of the city offer more options and better facilities. Scholarships are given to the best students who are usually from well-to-do

families. Ann commented that the cost to go to school is greater today, therefore the potential for kids from these families to get an education as good as that of kids from more well-to-do families is very unlikely. She gave an example of this:

> We have a friend who's a systems analyst and he's bought a computer for his home. His son is 13 and he's a wizard on that computer. I mean look at the father teaching that, the child. And they have already got new, brand new games that they have invented to play on that computer. You know, here's that child is going to excel and yet the poor kid down the block who's delivering newspapers so he can just buy his, help his mother buy his books all year hasn't got a hope in hades. You know, and there's nothing wrong with that child. He can probably excell very well, but he is not given the chance. You know, its just totally unfair (1-3-8,9).

As Ann told it, the symptoms of an educational system that discriminate against kids from lower income families are quite evident. She indicated that working class students often do not work to their potential. They also develop a different definition of success than students from well-to-do families. She thought that the working class person would define success in this manner:

> I think that "success" to the average person is just having a home; making enough money to feed his family; being able to go away on vacation once in awhile (1-3-4,5).

She described how the elite, the people that education was directed to, would define success:

> They would probably measure it in money... I think with that group, with the elite group, high income, I guess... they think in terms of how many holidays they can take a year, how many cars they can own, yachts,

> the cost of the clothing on their backs, and, you know, things like that. I would imagine that's how they term success (1-3-4,5).

Another symptom of discrimination in schooling that Ann listed had to do with who dropped out of school and, as stated earlier, who received the scholarships to further their education. She stated:

> And the dropout level this year is very high, extremely high. I'd like to see, because the exams are back in. And, I'd like to see just what group it is that are falling out of school. I don't think its the high level. When I look at some of the addresses of the kids that are getting scholarships, it doesn't look like they're coming from the working class (1-3-12).

Ann began to analyze what could be changed so that students would not go through the discriminating process that had typified her education and education today. She thought teachers could be more sensitive to the needs of the children. A teacher should look at "who he encourages and he'll have to forget who's sitting in his classroom." (1-3-11)

Ann also described the drastic changes needed in our curricula to provide students with subject matter that is more interesting and that allows students to become more socially aware. She thought that schools should deal a lot more with the issues that affect working people, particularly in Canada. Poverty, medicare changes, unemployment, and the closing of the General Hospital, were all examples of these issues that she listed. Ann explained

that this approach to the study of social issues would be better because "you're involved as a student." (1-4-12)

Ann felt that people today are too accepting of things that happen in our society that hurt them. For example, people often think that they cannot succeed at fighting the government to obtain their rights. She thought that if students were taught to be more analytical and critical in their approach to issues, they could win.

Ann hypothesized that these changes in education would make people more knowledgeable and self-confident. Their time and energy, generally, would not be wasted. She thought they would become "free-thinking" and would be prepared to act on their thoughts. Under these conditions, students would be able to reach their full potential. Educating students in this manner would also better prepare them for the future.

Ann concluded that there was not much hope of seeing her vision of education being implemented in the near future. She thought that "some of the things that are being taught today may help make the children ... conscious of certain things," (1-3-11,12) but she was not optimistic of changes that would drastically improve the education that lower income students are receiving. In fact, she concluded that education was going in reverse with the present changes taking place.

I don't know, if ten years down the line, we're going to see any difference, you know. At this point, right now, it just doesn't seem to be any different. No, it doesn't. I think we cater to the rich and we're going to continue catering to the rich.

They've gone back to a junior and senior matric again, program, which went out years and years ago. And they've come back. It's not the same thing.

So how are we going to change the system if the government now has initiated that kind of thing? (1-3-11,12)

Don Mueller

> You find out by accident that unions do some good for people, for the workers. ...it's a nasty thing to have to belong to a union. That's the message I was getting. It may not have been said in those words, but, you know, it's a real distorted point of view. ... by far, the bulk of ... the students are going to be workers. Somebody has to be a worker, but yet their role in society is not explained (2-2-16).

During the summer of 1984, I contacted the Alberta Federation of Labour to find someone from its executive who would participate in this study. After talking to several people who were not educated in Alberta, I found Don Mueller. I telephoned Don and described my study to him. Don was a full-time business representative for his union and involved in some crucial negotiations at the time. He was concerned about the time required by him to participate in the study. After reassurances that participation would not take an excessive amount of time from his work, Don agreed to participate. I mailed him a letter outlining the study and formally requested his participation. I included a copy of the Outline of Specific Research Questions (see Appendix C).

I met Don for the first time in early August, 1984. The other three conversations were held in December, 1984. These late dates were due to a strike that Don had to handle, his holidays, and the beginning of a new school year in a new school for me. We held the second conversation in his office in early December, the third in my home, and the

fourth in his home. Each of these taped conversations lasted approximately one hour. However, we usually met for a total of about two hours. The other time was spent discussing a host of other issues.

Our first two meetings in Don's office established the context of our conversations. Don was, above all else, a union leader who was making a tremendous commitment of time and energy to his union. He quickly expressed his concern for working class and under-privleged people through his comments about events taking place in society. Our identity of views on these issues helped to develop a friendly atmosphere to our conversation. Consequently, the last two conversations were a chat over tea at the kitchen table. Don was forty-eight years of age. He was socially aware and a politically active member of the New Democratic Party. He demonstrated a knowledge of social and economic problems of working class people and the trade union movement. He also showed a concern over the independent future of our country. Don didn't hide his schooling problems and was very direct and articulate in what he had to say regarding issues that we discussed.

I came into Don's office late one afternoon, as he was completing a telephone call. He explained a few details regarding some negotiations he was involved with, as he put the telephone answering machine on and closed the office door. We discussed some aspects of the political scene in

Alberta and Canada and my interest in workers' experiences in school. This discussion seemed to dispell some of Don's concern about what the purpose of the interviews was. As each of the conversations took place, we both became more comfortable and a strong conversational format enveloped the discussions.

> And you can't say that I was really out jacking around because I was on the farm. It was just a case of, you know, my interest wasn't there. And if you haven't got the interest, then it's difficult to do well (2-1-11).

Recalling His Student Days. Don began by outlining his personal and educational history. He was born in 1940, and raised on a farm in south-central Alberta. He went to school in a small town near his home where he completed twelve years of schooling. He pointed out how smaller schools, such as the school he attended, had split classes and rotating curricula. The latter, for Don, meant studying grade eleven subjects when he was in grade ten.

Don felt the lack of programs in a rural school hurt him. Counselling was virtually non-existent at that time. Don's counsellor was a teacher with whom Don had a conflict. He taught Don from grade 7 to 12. Don felt that a counsellor, who was not a classroom teacher, may have helped him with this situation, because there was "no way ... [he was] baring ...[his] soul to this guy (2-1-11).

Don also would have liked to have had more guidance relating to careers. He explained how he felt about the lack of counselling in school:

> If it was nothing else other than counselling, giving you some direction, some assistance in that way, in choosing a career, then I feel that would have been a distinct advantage to myself. It's not that I may have chosen another career, or that I'm resentful of the one that I did choose, prior to becoming a union representative, but I would have made it easier for myself had I that kind of guidance and direction. But quite possibly with that kind of goal in mind, I would have been a student that got twice the marks I got. Like, it would have alleviated the uncertainty of my destiny, where the hell I was going to go (2-2-9,10).

Another concern of Don's education was the kind of teachers that rural areas hired due to their remoteness at the time. Teachers would often stay for only a couple of years, then move on. Don explained that many of these teachers were from Saskatchewan and could not get jobs there because they were forced to retire at age sixty-five, or they were rejected in Saskatchewan for other reasons. He added that these people, because of their age and bitterness at having to move from Saskatchewan, were not very progressive.

Don felt that it was more important to have a good teacher in particular courses. He gave math and English as examples of courses in which this was the case. This explanation was given of how a teacher could affect student achievement in these courses:

> Math - in one year I really did well because I really got along well with the teacher and - like he made it

> interesting. The whole class did well. But the next year, like forget it. It was just a case of the teacher not being able to hold our interest (2-1-11).

Don had another concern about teachers. This problem surfaced for him when he came into conflict with a teacher that taught him from grade 7 to 12. This teacher had also taught Don's older brother and sister. When Don came into grade seven, he was told by this teacher that he "wasn't as "competent" as ... [his] older brother and sister, [and] that he [the teacher] had no trouble with them. Why was ...[he, Don] such a little prick." (2-1-2)

Don felt that part of the problem with this teacher was that a personality conflict existed. He also thought this teacher had a capitalist political bias that he, the teacher, wanted students to accept. In Don's view, this teacher was "a real right-winger. This guy was the last of the free enterprisers." (2-1-2) Don objected to the teacher and his bias.

> And you know, if the Curriculum isn't bad enough, he makes it even worse. It's like the interpretation of the law. If the administration is leaning one way, that's the way he's going to interpret it. If you don't like it, you have to challenge it (2-1-2).

However, Don felt that teachers, in general, maintained a bias against labour that negatively and significantly influenced kids. He gave this example and explanation of this point:

> The feeling or the instructions that came to us was that the people that were out on strike [during the Winnipeg General Strike] were wrong, like wrong, wrong,

> wrong. They couldn't possibly have been right . And you know, even if the Curriculum - it had been the other way, that they were supporting the people that were out on strike at that time, it can be avoided or it can be turned around by the teacher himself or herself to the point that it reflects the other attitude. And children at that age are very ... easily influenced. And you're, for one thing, constantly being bombarded by the media, from the right anti-labour attitude, and when a teacher says it too - well then its, its pretty easy to accept that (2-1-8).

Don remembered teachers controling students by not allowing critical thinking to be expressed or not allowing the development of one's own opinion. He didn't remember anyone disagreeing with teachers. Students were there to learn what was taught and accept what was said by teachers.

Later, Don focused on what he was taught in school. Initially, he did not remember anything of his social studies classes. However, as we talked, things began to come back to him.

Don explained that he believed the school system had a capitalist bias and was organized to teach this bias to students. Students were directed to think like company managers, accepting the pro-business interpretation of events. They were told to succeed by striving to be management.

> My impression from school is that once you graduate, the prime objective is to be management; everybody's got to be management. That's how you succeed. You may have to be a worker for a while, and that's too bad. But management is going to be your heaven on earth (2-2-16).

Students were also told what their political views should be. At the same time, they were bombarded with anti-worker

and anti-union sentiments. Working class jobs were put down and workers' actions were critized.

Don explained that the social studies courses were also devoid of content to do with workers' problems, contributions to society, and accomplishments. He stated that even though "the bulk of people are going to be, the students are going to be workers... their role in society is not explained." (2-2-16)

Courses were also very biased in how they treated labour. Don gave this explanation of how, as a student, they were taught about the Industrial Revolution:

> We were taught in school that that was the best thing since sliced bread was invented in my time. But you know, it was a real success story. There was none of the ills that went with it explained. It was just basically the same attitude that this government has, that anything that companies are involved in, it's good. If they make money, it's good; but, workers rights are of no relevance. And I can recall that kind of thing, for want of a better term, being exploited. That was the in thing, that was a good thing to have happen and it kind of dawned on me many, many years later that, Christ, you know, this, all this Industrial Revolution, there had to be some people hurt by it. But never, ever was that ever discussed. You talk about the new technology now and we're going through the same thing where the workers are being affected. Companies are profiting by it. The workers are hurt - the company has profit, but you know really, it's not for the good of the country. It's all in the name of profit and that's really the long and short of it. But I don't think that there's enough of that being explained (2-2-15).

Don explained that the United States influenced our education system. This meant that we, in Alberta, studied the same things as they did in the United States. He

remembered discovering this when relatives from the United States came to visit them. He commented about having to learn a lot of American history:

> Like who gives a shit who was the second President of the U.S. ...I remember ... vaguely being a little resentful of having to know American history (2-1-13).

This American influence on course content was particularly applicable to social studies courses. Don explained that there was an emphasis on learning about the United States and that there wasn't much taught about Canada.

> There was so much emphasis put on knowing the States and being able to name all the States, knowing where they were on the map within the country, that really, I guess to a large extent, I got really turned off by it (2-4-2).

The degree of American course content translated into influences on students' perceptions of the United States. Don indicated that as a result of his education, he dreamed of going "to the United States, [to] see what I learned about." (2-3-7)

> You had to accept it. I guess probably that may even be why I rebelled in another way. I just didn't give a shit if I did my courses or my lessons. That was my way of getting back at them (2-2-12).

Life After Schooling. Don's response to an education that he did not like was to turn off to it. He also

developed a resentment towards some of the courses he was taking because of their content (eg. American history).

Don did not put much effort into his work. He failed some courses in grade 11, then "lost interest." He pointedly stated that he completed grade 12, but did not receive his grade 12 diploma because he didn't get many of his grade 12 subjects. There was no question, in his mind, that he would finish grade 12; however, he knew that he was not doing well and could have done better. He considered his achievement as "lower than average." (2-1-11) This lack of achievement was due to a lack of interest in his schooling; he "just didn't give a shit any more." (2-1-11)

Since the family farm would not maintain all nine grown children in Don's family, Don knew he had to look elsewhere to earn a livelihood. He didn't know if he wanted an apprenticeship and had "some fear about what would happen on the job." (2-1-3) Therefore, he applied to enter an automotive mechanics course at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT). He viewed this as a last minute decision made out of desperation to find a career. However, Don was not at all sure that he was going to be accepted for this program and began to search for other job alternatives. He was accepted into a two-year course at SAIT before anything else came up. Consequently, his career went in that direction.

After one year at SAIT, Don went to work in a small garage. He was not registered as an apprentice, was paid poor wages, and basically did janitorial work so he quit after three months. He moved to a large city and worked in a service station. He worked there for three months and was not registered as an apprentice by the owner in this place either, so he also quit this job. From there, Don went to a small town to work in a farm machinery dealership. He also did not become registered in his apprenticeship there for three months.

Don worked in the machinery dealership as a heavy duty mechanic, although he was apprenticing as an automotive mechanic. Eventually, his employer died and he found it impossible to work for the employer's wife and her brother. He quit and moved to work for the manufacturer of this machinery in another large city. There, he became one of the first applicants to certify the shop as a union shop. Later, he became a job steward, then a chief job steward, and eventually was elected onto the local union executive. Finally, Don became involved in a submission to the union headquarters to have a full-time representative in the area. He applied for the position once it was approved, and got it. Thus, he came to the job he presently had.

> The way the labour forces were controlled by the Mounties, the RCMP... it's a God awful sham. Like, it's too bad the people don't know in this country what happens here or what did happen. And I think that's the kind of thing that our curriculum should be telling our students. It wasn't just a bunch of nice, getting-along folks, we got our problems and why else did they bring the RCMP out, but to keep the people down, particularly when they're putting a railroad across the country. But the bloody conditions these people had to live in and work in. And the promises that were made to them by the CPR. And they're never ever fulfilled. The hardships these families had to endure as a result of broken homes (2-4-9).

Reflections on Schooling. There were a number of reasons that Don considered important for his lack of interest in school. He questioned the system of education where the whole purpose of learning was to do well on a final exam. He saw students in both the past and present spending a lot of energy cramming before exams, yet remembering very little after them. Don asked the rhetorical question, "What was it being taught for?" (2-1-14) He pointed out that much of what students are tested on has little relevance to their lives:

> Whether or not it has anything to do with outside life or whether or not the student retains it beyond that, I don't think is of any concern, necessarily, to the teaching profession. It may be to individual teachers, but the education system doesn't promote that. It only promotes what they can translate or transfer out of their heads and put onto paper. Some of it probably is retained and some of it is probably being retained without the students even knowing this (2-3-3).

Don now felt that the lengthy and bitter conflict with one of his teachers hurt his education. However, even more importantly, the experience of getting an education in a

rural area was a major stumbling block for him. He stated that students in the cities had many advantages over rural students. He considered his education in rural Alberta to have set him back.

Don thought that the "generation [he] went to school with were suppressed" (2-2-11) by teachers not allowing students to develop their own ideas and express these in class. At the same time, Don thought that the problems of the education system could not entirely be blamed on teachers. He stated that "it isn't always the teachers' fault." (2-1-11) At the same time, he said, "in those years who the hell do you blame?" (2-1-11)

Earlier, Don had commented on how teachers had expected students to listen to them and accept everything they had to say uncritically. He explained how, generally, our education system was not designed to produce thinking people. "They never learn to think for themselves." (2-2-5) He thought that "we're teaching them to be robots." (2-1-10)

Reflecting back, Don thought that the United States had a tremendous influence on our education system. He stated that he thought the American influence on our education was due to the dependence of the Canadian economy on the primarily American, multi-national corporations. The United States was able to exert a political influence in Canada.

> It's perceived in Canada that the American companies control or dominate the Canadian economy. And I can see that companies that have American headquarters are

> told what they can and can not bid on. Like the Vietnam war was a good example, where at the time I was working for International Harvester. The Canadian end of International Harvester could not bid on any contracts that were being subcontracted or sublet out of other countries and, in essence, compete with their American counterparts. And the other thing is, they told the Canadian subsidiary that they could not export vehicles to Cuba, for example. That, to me, just indicates that - or supports the theory that we are just a branch plant operation (2-4-1).

Don felt that school curricula were influenced by this dependence. For example, our text books were from the United States. Don commented:

> They reflected a totally American perspective of education. I don't know that I can be specific on what leaves this impression with me, just that in general it's from an American point of view that instruction is given (2-4-1).

Don thought that the education system sorted and selected students for various job categories. Students who had negative attitudes, either through being critical of what was being presented or rebelling in other ways, were the students who were streamed into working class jobs such as manual labour. Those that did well, that didn't resist the system, that agreed with the teachers, and that were from affluent families went on to higher education.

Reflecting back, Don thought he would have liked to have gone to university into something like labour law. However, he stated that "it was never, ever thought that any of us could go to university." (2-1-9) It was perceived, at least by his family, that the few that went to university were "snobs." (2-1-9)

Don viewed education today as doing much the same thing. He thought that the government's desire would be for only the top students to go on to university. These were sent there because they would become the corporate managers and future leaders of the country.

Don thought that there have been minimal changes in our school system in the direction that he would like to see it go. He thought that one healthy change was allowing and even encouraging students to disagree with the teacher and with the viewpoint of the subject matter. However, he believed that the study of organized labour and workers' achievements are not in the school curricula today. He thought that working class leaders, such as Donald Macdonald, are not recognized. Favourable labour legislation and how it was obtained is not studied. An important example is the right to organize. Nothing is mentioned about this right in the textbooks and no credit is given to organized labour and their leaders for its achievement in law. Don also thought that the study of labour history and how labour is treated in other countries would allow workers to know their own history and possibly their destiny. This knowledge may also help workers to solve some of the problems they face in life.

Instead, Don suggested that people turn inwards, blame themselves, and blame the victim when they encounter problems. He stated that he has observed members of his own

union who blame themselves if they can't get a job or if they become unemployed. They look at themselves as failures, possibly because they didn't work hard enough. He added these comments about students looking for their first jobs:

> It isn't necessarily those that have been working that are blaming themselves for being unemployed. What does it do to students that can't get an initial job and get some kind of experience? ...I would imagine there's a lot of self-blame there, too. I don't understand why there wouldn't be. They're from the same society and it's got to be something that's been taught to them that makes them feel this way (2-2-5).

Don discussed other changes necessary to improve the schooling of students. He saw the development of a new social studies curriculum as being a priority for providing a new direction to education. He thought it important to design a curriculum and accompanying textbooks for the whole of Canada. Don thought that such curriculum design would have very important implications because it could unify Canada by having each part of Canada understand the other and its history. This would give Canadians an identity of our own and a pride in our own country.

> It could do nothing but unify it [our country]. If everyone knows what the other section of a country is doing, what their history is, then I can see that going a long way towards having some identity of our own (2-4-3).

Don thought Canadians should be the ones to develop this curriculum because we know and understand the history

of the working people of this country. People like Pierre Berton, who has already written some of this history, could be called upon.

He explained that this curriculum and materials for teaching the courses should contain information on the role of workers and unions in society. He suggested teaching how unions function and making sure students understand the purpose and method of negotiations. He stated that students, as adults, should be encouraged to become involved in negotiations. People would then understand that their benefits are not a gift from a "benevolent employer." Don felt that they would know what kind of employer they have if they saw what happens at the bargaining table. Then they may not view the union as the "bad guy."

Don thought people should be encouraged to work with management. He explained that the adverse publicity in the media and schools about other labour-management techniques, such as the Japanese model, destroys this. Instead, confrontation is encouraged by these institutions because of this narrow vision regarding labour relations.

Don discussed the contributions that workers have made to the development of living standards of people in this country. He thought that these should also be studied. The forty hour work week, two weeks annual vacation, and wages that are comparable to those of workers in the United States are accomplishments of organized labour in Canada that

students should know about. The lobbying, strikes, and work of labour leaders in obtaining these for workers should be studied. He noted:

> There are some very noted incidents in the history of labour that I think could very easily be accomodated in the curriculum if the people doing the curriculum were so inclined. It wouldn't take that much research (2-4-5).

Don felt students should be made aware of labour in every facet of the social studies program. He suggested, for example, that in the unit on Africa one could study how apartheid affects the workers of South Africa.

Another improvement in education, Don explained, was that an experiential mode be used to teach. An experiential method of teaching would include using more audiovisuals, more speakers, and having more books on labour in the library. Also, travel in Canada should be encouraged.

Don explained the functioning of an experiential teaching mode in the classroom. He stated that groups should critically analyze and discuss the experience that they went through. There would be no lecture and no cramming because the material would have been learned in the first place.

Don felt that the prospects for implementation of an improved curriculum which would portray labour in a more positive manner were not good and that changes were not imminent. He stated that the Alberta Federation of Labour had attempted to get more labour identification in the

curriculum, to no avail. He doubted that people like Pierre Berton would be used as a "base for any teachings" in the near future because, "he's very outspoken, he's well-spoken, and he does not necessarily sympathize with the position the government has taken or corporations - that they've been necessarily good for Canada." (2-4-9) However, Don thought that these changes in teaching methods, in addition to changes in the social studies curriculum, would go a long way towards making school interesting and relevant for children. He stated:

> At least there would be one seed planted [with the teaching of content to do with labour]. There would be some food for thought and maybe some questions asked by the students. Because they would be exposed to that kind of thing, I don't think that necessarily means that you'd end up with them all sympathetic towards the labour union, but, at least, they'd be given both points of view or at least another point of view (2-2-17).

Ron Williams

> I found [it] more and more of a struggle...to work at it ...you needed to work at it once in a while...now everything seems interesting. It didn't seem that way towards the end (3-1-2).

During the early summer of 1985, I began to search for a third person to interview. I was looking to find someone who was a member of an Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) affiliate and held a position on their local union executive. My attention focused on a local of the public employees union.

A member of a school support staff suggested that he would participate in my research. After confirming that the president of his union local was unavailable to participate, and that Ron met the qualifications necessary for the third person that I was to interview, I agreed on his participation. I gave Ron a letter formally requesting his participation. I also gave him a copy of my Outline of Specific Research Questions (see Appendix C). We set a date early in July, 1985, for our first conversation. The other three conversations were held during that month.

Each taped conversation was approximately one hour in length. However, we spent some time before and after the conversations and on other occasions discussing issues related to the conversations recorded on tape. On all four occasions, we met in the staffroom at the school in which he worked.

While I had met Ron previously, it was a relationship based upon separate and different work responsibilities. Neither of us knew each other very well. Therefore, our series of conversations began in much the same manner as with the previous two participants. In the beginning, there was hesitation and nervousness on the part of Ron over what was expected and what direction to go in carrying the conversation forward. Ron also found the conversations very taxing, at the start. The tension quickly vanished and a relaxed atmosphere replaced it as the conversations took place. The mutual respect that existed before the conversations increased as they progressed.

The discussion in this series of conversations developed in much the same manner as in the previous two interviews; the issues emerged and were woven together in a design like a patchwork quilt. As with any conversation, the topical discussion was a natural progression based upon the interests of each of the participants in interpreting and giving meaning to our educational experiences.

Late in the afternoon, early in July, 1985, I drove up to the school in the small, central Alberta town where Ron lived and worked, for our first conversation. He was just completing his day's work of summer cleaning. As I set up my tape recorder in the staffroom, he made some coffee and we talked a bit about education.

> Social studies never touched on daily life... not reality, not really ... It never taught you what a normal working person's life is like and what you could expect (3-1-4).

Recalling His Student Days. Ron began the interview by describing some of his personal history and his schooling. He was born in 1951 and completed grade twelve in 1969. He was married with one pre-school child. His parents were both teachers and he came from a middle-class, professional family. Ron clarified this by stating that his family was "upper-middle class." (3-1-11) However, he added that "as far as wealth, I wasn't. But compared to a lot of people, I suppose, I was in a higher income bracket." (3-1-11)

Ron outlined the schools he had attended mostly in small towns in Alberta. He explained that his family moved because, as teachers, his parents sought jobs in different places. When his father got a job with a provincial teachers' association, Ron went to a separate high school in the city where he completed his last two years of schooling.

Ron described his attitude towards schooling. He pointed out that he had been an honour student until grade ten. Then, school became just work. It was uninteresting and a struggle. Ron "wasn't able to focus properly." (3-1-3) He "remember[ed] trying to study for some exams in high school and it just didn't happen like it should of; it was too much effort." (3-1-3)

Ron stated that he did not take grade eleven or twelve social studies because he was more interested in the sciences. Later, he corrected himself and did remember taking social studies in grade eleven, but couldn't remember the course too well. He did remember his social studies classes being mostly things to do with the functioning of government. For example, he learned what the legislature was like, how many representatives there were, and what the various bodies did. He also remembered learning a little history. This history included the study of the Greeks and Romans, the explorers, the pioneers, and confederation.

Ron thought that his social studies courses had several problems. They did not teach about reality. He explained that he did not remember anything being taught about work, labour history, or society in general. These shortcomings in his schooling meant a lack of preparation for life, for what you were going to be doing for the rest of your life, which was work.

Another problem with the social studies was with the study of current affairs or other historical issues. Ron explained that they did study what was taking place in the world, but there was no study of the background to the issues, why the event happened, or the context of them. He gave an example of this point by describing how the Winnipeg General Strike was presented to him as a student.

> The isssues weren't even discussed. All that was discussed was that the Mounties had to go in and beat people on the head and that was it (3-1-6).

Ron felt that Social 30, which he did not take, may have dealt more with the situation in the world.

A further problem with school that Ron mentioned was the teaching methods of his Social 20 teacher. She followed the text, totally, and she didn't seem to have much inspiration for teaching. She didn't involve "extra things." (3-1-5)

Ron encountered a final problem in his social studies with the political perspective that was used in teaching about events. He felt they were presented from a "capitalist" (3-4-19) point of view. An example was, when things were explained in class, one side of something was explained and "You had no idea of why the other people were in conflict." (3-4-19)

Ron gave an example of one resource used to teach students in a very biased manner. He studied current affairs from the magazine Scholastic News. It was described by him as having "a very right-wing perspective." (3-4-20)

Ron felt schools often used out-of-date materials. He pointed out an example of the textbooks' and the curricula's shortcomings in that the use of drugs was not and still is not dealt with properly in schools.

The city school Ron went to for grades eleven and twelve offered fewer options. He felt this lack of options

hurt him. He compared the opportunities in the city public system with those available in the city separate system he attended.

> — The Roman Catholic system didn't have the funding... One of the things that I was interested in was music, and there was no band program in the Catholic system. There was no drama (3-1-12).

Ron discussed the importance of options by relating his experiences when he was in grade ten. He commented about attending the large, rural high school, which offered a considerable number of options to students. "It was like opening a door and getting fresh air. So you know, it just kept your interest up more." (3-2-13) Ron also explained that some schools in large towns, such as the high school he attended for grade ten, had better programs than smaller centers. These better programs also made a difference in how interested some students were in school.

Ron completed his grade twelve in a smaller, city high school. This school did not have a vocational program, but it did have a business education program. Ron felt that in this school there was less streaming of students than in larger city high schools because students could not be sent into these programs. In fact, he did not realize at the time that students were being "funnelled" (3-2-20) at all.

> At that period in time there was no clarity in goals. There just seemed to be so many diverse ways that I could go and so many desires that I had as a youth acting at once, plus a rather unsettling family situation .., and then of course the turmoil of youth in general in North America at that time. It just made it very difficult to focus (3-3-4).

Life After Schooling. Ron went to university in the fall of 1969, enrolling in a Bachelor of Science, pre-med program. He quit after two years and "drifted" (3-1-1) for a while. He worked for the city in which he lived and later worked as an automotive mechanic. Ron got into drugs for a while. He also involved himself in radical politics. Ron's attitude that studying for exams was too much effort carried into university. He lost sight of the goal of his education. This lack of vision caused him to bomb out in his second year of university, he suggested.

Ron now works in a school as part of the support staff. He is a member of the public employees union and the secretary-treasurer of his local. He is taking university courses part time to complete a Bachelor of Education degree.

Ron explained that he has now matured. He has rejected the way other people see him and has now accepted himself for what he is. He now enjoys work and feels successful at his present job. However, he feels that he is not fulfilling his potential. He is tired of menial work and sees becoming a teacher as a way out of this situation.

> Why should history just dwell on leaders? Why shouldn't it dwell on the common folk? It would make it more interesting and there would be a lot less date memorization and whatnot ... And the kids, I think, would relate to it more (3-2-10).

Reflections on Schooling. Ron now defines his dissatisfaction with the school system as having lost "sight of what education is for." (3-1-2) He "lost sight of the goal" (3-1-2) of education, which he considered to be a job, more money, and social status. Ron does not begrudge the education system for the direction that his life took. He explains this with his comment on the social studies courses he took.

> Well, I don't have lofty expections and I don't have any negative feelings about the way it was done. I really haven't analyzed it to see what could have been done and what could have been taught. In my situation, what do you deal with? (3-1-6)

At the same time, Ron sees some major problems with the school system that educated him. He views this system as a contributing factor to his directionless situation.

Ron explained how an unsettling family situation and the youth rebellion of the time were other things that affected him when he was going to school. He added that other people at the time were also influenced by these things, in addition to things like drugs and politics. Ron commented on his education.

> But, by the same token, maybe some of this irresponsibility, that you talk about, is the rebelliousness and the lack of interest by the time grade 12 rolls around, maybe some of it's a result of ... not just because there is nothing on labour, but

> because you are streaming people, you are invalidating things [ie. not teaching the things important to the student - not teaching reality] (3-1-8).

Ron felt during the period of transition from high school to university that there was insufficient guidance given by schools and parents to students. He stated that both parties seemed to feel students no longer needed a strong guiding hand once they reach the age of seventeen or eighteen. This was one of the most crucial times for students in their lives to receive guidance.

Another problem Ron had was adjusting to life in the city. The size of the university, riding buses, and the congestion all bothered him. "I just got sick and tired of the whole rat race...being penned up in there." (3-3-5) He stated that it took him several years to adjust to living in the city, he doesn't want to go back to live there, and he can now stand the city because he lives in the country and has to only drive into the city from time to time.

Ron felt he was always motivated to do something with his life. For example, he was always interested in learning. However, he thought some kids just don't fit into the school system and sometimes don't fit into anything including their homes or society. Sometimes these kids are motivated to develop themselves in ways that the school cannot help them such as athletically, with vocational training, or artistically. In other cases, Ron felt some kids simply lack "a biological urge for motivation." (3-3-1)

He felt these kids do not have an innate drive to do good or to complete things. This lack of an innate drive explains some kid's lack of achievement in school. On the other hand, some kids naturally want to learn. Ron explained that these kids, "love solving problems. They just want to sit and to satisfy the job, ... complete the job that they are doing." (3-4-8)

Ron developed a thorough critique of the organized schooling system. He went back to the origins of the Canadian school system in outlining his view of our contemporary school system. He stated that a major purpose of the school system was crowd control. One could:

> look at Ryerson ... in Ontario, when he was dealing with so many different people, vying for the power pot... the purpose and the rationale ... behind the education, institutionalization of it, was to channel people into a specific way of thinking, to make them accept the Canadian way of life and not become Republican, for one thing (3-4-18).

Ron explained that those organizing the school system wanted to indocrinate people "to go in a specific direction in order to fit into society" (3-1-8) so that they would not challenge the system. Thus, society would perpetuate itself because people would be educated to go with the flow. He explained why people were being controlled by the well-to-do to think in a designated manner.

> If you buck, if you go with labour, if you go with rebelliousness, or radicalism, you're bucking the system. And if you don't buck the system, then there's no anarchy, there's no disruption (3-1-8,9).

Ron analyzed another aspect of controling and limiting students' educational experiences. He felt students who do not have a variety of options and programs available to them were being prepared for working class jobs. On the other hand, upper class students who had these doors open to them would be prepared for better jobs, management-type occupations. Ron explained.

> That brings forth one thing that I remember from the courses [university courses presently being taken by Ron] and that is that the reason lower class aren't given these options is because they are being funneled into a tedious type of existence where they have to endure this, whereas the upper class are in management, in creative positions where they are supposed to be (pause) advancing new ideas and new (pause)...new concepts. So they are given this form of training which allows them to do that... It makes sense to me (3-3-10).

Ron outlined how students are sorted and selected for various job categories. He listed several factors as important in this process which he called "streaming." (3-1-10) These factors included how well students perform on tests, teacher bias, gender, and a family's wealth and social status. He pointed out how students are sorted and selected for careers on the basis of wealth and social status.

> It occurs a lot of ways; such minimum ways, as you ... [have in] your home a quiet environment, food, you know, so that you're a healthy person and when you do come to school you have the ability to concentrate and focus on what's happening. ... I imagine it would affect your family life and how receptive you are to school because in some of the lower class dwellings and whatnot, the maritial problems, are greater and

> therefore so is your [dis]inclination towards study, towards society in general (3-1-11).

Ron elaborated on how family wealth and social status affect students. He explained that children from wealthy families achieve better than those from working class families. As a result, from an early age, children from working class families are streamed into vocational patterns.

> The school sets up these expectations. Anybody could be a doctor, a lawyer and whatnot. Statistically, it's been proven it's not true and I believe the statistics... I've read the figures on the number of people trying to get into law, medicine, engineering. For medicine, there's five hundred people applying; seventy-five get in.... The statistics have been done on the people who have gotten in, and they're for the most part, a larger percentage are, the sons and daughters of professional people. So the money dictates who gets it and it's a fallacy to suggest to children that you have the same opportunities as everybody else does. It's not an equal opportunity system (3-1-10).

Ron raised several other things that affect the quality of education that students receive and that consequently streams them. He stated that smaller education systems and smaller schools provided a poorer education. This poorer quality of education was due to the availability of less money to them which meant a smaller variety of programs offered to students in a particular school.

Also, fewer types of schools with unique programs would be available in a smaller school system. Ron explained that in Edmonton, for example, there were schools students could go to that had a stronger orientation on the arts. Therefore, people who had a strong creative bent could have

this developed by attending such a school. He pointed out the limited number of options offered in the school in which he now worked and thought that this hurt the students there.

Ron moved on to analyze the importance of options for students. He explained that offering options students were interested in would be more stimulating, enhance student success in school, and allow the student to do better in life. He commented that:

> maybe the only way you might be more motivated is because of the options, which is a big thing. I suppose, if you could see further along, if you could dabble more, you know, in more interesting things, rather than following the curriculum [the academic path] - but I think anybody with a high ability can come out by just studying the texts. Options can do a lot for a person; maybe it's proven too (3-1-14).

Ron concluded it was "the non-academics, the vocational people, the people who just can't cut the stuff, [and] aren't interested" (3-3-11) who were most affected by the availablity of options. He stated that statistics also show upper class students have more options available to them. This greater choice, he thought, was a result of having more money available in their schools.

One final method whereby lower class students were prepared for menial, labour-type occupations was discussed. Ron felt that directing students towards particular stations in life would be enhanced with the trend towards an increase in rote memorization of material. Since students are weeded out according to abilities, those who accept this type of

learning and who can learn in this manner will succeed at school. Those who are critical or rebellious will fail and will be streamed into working class jobs.

Ron discussed necessary changes in the school curricula. He began by talking about necessary changes based upon what is presently happening in our province and country. He stated that the present generation is going through the "trauma of unemployment" (3-3-12) and the schools have an obligation to assist students in coping with it. Schools should teach guidance and other courses that "can teach them to choose a career properly; to have selected avenues to escape if their choices don't work; to show them what is involved in a career." (3-3-12)

Ron explained what he meant by teaching students things involved in a career. He thought students should know, specifically, what a person does when he or she has that job. He suggested using films and books to show the day-to-day work of a person doing a particular job. In addition, Ron felt that things like interpreting collective agreements, labour history, the history of unemployment, and development of society could be useful things for students to study. These would assist students in their lives. He explained.

> It certainly makes sense to me, that a person should understand, what they're going into, in the workforce. [They should] be aware of the way that they're going to be treated, and the way that people have been treated in the past, and why things are the way they are... I

> don't know what it would do for the people coming out of school. It can only enhance their lives... because they wouldn't get walked on so readily (3-2-22).

Ron stressed students studying things like union contracts. He felt these were things that people had fought for and won over many years. They were basic rights and vital for people's "normal, human existence." (3-1-7)

Ron also felt there were things students should be learning in school that related to other aspects of their lives. He suggested teaching students about the transition from childhood to adulthood and from school to work, moving out on your own, parenting skills, comparative religion, sex and sexuality, nuclear warfare, and cooperative methods of owning and running stores and factories. These topics, he felt, were all things that would enhance student's achievement in school and in life.

Educational changes now being proposed by Alberta Education and the direction this will take our education were discussed by Ron. He did not like the elimination of the "B options" from the junior high school course of studies. Ron thought these options were escape valves for students. Since these options were often "an experience in the outside world," (3-1-16) he thought many students were more interested in them and could relate to them better than academic subjects. Consequently, he felt the government was taking away from students something that was valid, something that might allow them to develop in an area in

which they were interested, and something that might otherwise keep them in school. He thought this change would have the implication of putting these students "on the unemployment lists" (3-3-12) once they finish school.

Ron explained that the trend in education towards rote memorization would have dire consequences for students from lower income families. He felt teaching students in this manner would prepare them to do more tedious tasks. Conversely, he thought society really needed people who have developed creative abilities because the increased use of technology would eliminate the tedious jobs. The lower income students would be the ones hurt most by schooling that does not prepare them properly.

Ron suggested schools should use an experiential method of teaching. He suggested one should look to the example of China, where students work as part of their schooling, as an alternative system of education. Students would then know all about work when they left school. He explained.

> If you had sort of a work-study program, involved in the educational system ... it would be good for them because it would spur them on, and show them that they didn't want to do tedious stuff, and keep them motivated. But for others, they might just discover that it's all right (3-2-3).

Students would also understand how to tackle problems.

> Well, for me, the problem solving technique of experimental schooling was more valid because you are able to follow, you are able to solve your own problems and develop your own theories when you run into an obstacle, and especially since knowledge has become so vast. The idea was that, rather than having access to

> this knowledge in your head, you had access to it where ever you had to go to get it. I think it was a logical trend to me cause you can only spell out so many stuff; your attention's only so long. So the trick was to learn how to, when you ran into a problem, and I think that's as far as I understand it for engineers and whatnot, that's the whole scheme. The idea is to not have everything in your head but, you know, have developed formats, so that when you come to a problem, you are able to analyze it and solve it; know where to go for the information (3-4-5,6).

Ron felt schools do teach students to think more about the world situation and about their futures than they did when he went to school. He felt the schools have been adapting to changes in society that need to be dealt with in school. He stated.

> I don't know whether it's quick enough. How can you ever keep up you know? It's always gotta be a catch up type of thing. How can you anticipate what's going to happen so that you can keep up? (3-2-7)

Ron thought the direction the government is presently going with educational reform was backwards. He thought the government would likely evaluate what they've been doing at some point in the future and find that "they've gotten even further behind." (3-4-6)

Ron pointed out some of the problems encountered in making changes in school curricula and suggested that solutions to schooling problems be also sought in other places. He explained.

> It's hard to adapt because it's a big wheeling organization, isn't it? And to get curriculum on the books takes quite a few years. So by the time you're ready to deal with one problem, it's gone; there's another one there. I suppose it's the teachers' [problem], but by the same token is it always supposed

> to fall... [on] the school's head? What are the parents supposed to do, you know? (3-3-12)

He stated that another problem with implementing some of the changes discussed was the government controls the education system. He felt the government would never accept these changes because they were in direct opposition to what they represented at this time. He discussed the necessity of ultimately changing the government to implement a curricula that would whole-heartedly consider changes discussed. Ron concluded that a government more interested in people than money, one that is not interested in perpetuating inequality, one that is more humanitarian is needed to implement these changes. This kind of a government can only come to power, he stressed, by raising people's consciousness and getting politically involved.

> Well, if you taught them to go labour, to organize - we aren't taught that way - what would happen if you were taught that that was the way you should go, that you should have these rights? I think people would be more apt to do that. And as far as indoctrination, well, to me it's a form of indoctrination the way we're processed... That's the way a lot of people feel. That's what the school system does, not just by indoctrination, but by - you're weeded out according to your abilities. And if you taught people to be labour-oriented, to organize, I would think there would be more of them (3-1-9).

CHAPTER 5 - REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH

This study was undertaken to explore the meaning of the schooling experience for workers today, how they view those experiences both then and now, and what relationship those experiences have to their lives today. It arose out of a concern that many of the experiences students have in school have a different meaning for them than most of the predominant explanations that are given by ivory-tower pedagogues, other educational theorists, and education officials. This study was directed towards uncovering the meaning of schooling for those who had the experience, and further to uncover the commonality that binds these experiences together. It is also hoped that a further achievement will be the enlightenment of participants as to the deeper meaning of their actions.

This research has another implicit goal in the research methodology and interpretation chosen. Much of the literature on education has a top down (theorizing into action) orientation. The approach used in this research was consciously chosen to inform curricular theorizing with the human thoughts and feelings of workers, who as former students, experienced our educational institutions. Thus, as we see and come to understand ourselves and our situations, individuallly and collectively, we may also

begin to see the path ahead for informed action or praxis that will allow us to change and improve our education.

This chapter is devoted to a sense-making of the life stories recorded in Chapter 4. It presents a further interpretation of the meaning of the life stories by interpreting them in relation to what the literature says about schools (Chapter 2) and my observations of them (Chapter 1). In this respect, I will attempt to go beneath the surface of what has been written about education to show a deeper meaning of participant's actions by showing the social rules that make those actions intelligable to us.

The commonality of participant experiences is not intended to pose as generalization beyond the relationship of the participants in this study. Generalization is also not attempted in this chapter because, as stated earlier, the small number of participants does not lend itself to this. Instead, this chapter intends to show the relationships (ie. the things held in common) particularly between the participants' educational experiences and the literature but also between the participants' experiences and my experiences. The findings of this study will establish their significance if they coincide with the experiences of others. By this method other people may gain some perspective and understanding of their school experiences.

This chapter is organized around topics - the meanings of the school experience - that emerged as the participants related their life stories. The interpretation of these stories is built around each of the topics or meaning structures commmon to the participants.

The Lack of Individual Development and School Alienation

A strong message from each of the three participants in this study was that they had some experiences in school that strongly influenced them and their views of schooling. These experiences varied, but what was common to all the participants was the fact that they became turned off or alienated from school while in high school. This alienation affected them in ways that were very personal and painful.

Gonzalez pointed out that schools teach students to "rely not on themselves, but on external authority" (1982, p. 147) and that the reliance on external authority "gradually undermines the self-confidence and motivation necessary to sustain individual effort." (1982, p. 148) This situation is exemplified in the school experiences of the three participants in this study. Each one lost the motivation to achieve at the level at which they had been achieving in earlier grades. Also, Ann and Ron clearly felt a loss of self-confidence in high school. Each participant pointed to how the teachers were the authority to which

students had to listen and rely. Thus, there was a lack of individual development as defined by each participant.

Ann found her education "stifling" because she was not allowed to develop her own thoughts and perspectives. She felt she had to think and act as she was told by teachers. Ann felt a lack of individuality in the schools because they did not make her <u>feel important</u> or significant. This feeling was instead often diminished by teachers putting down or not recognizing achievements of some students. An example of this was Ann's teacher cutting Ann's picture out of the display on the bulletin board. Ann's feeling significant was also reduced or minimized when her teacher commented about how Ann had achieved higher than she, the teacher, had expected on the I. Q. test. In many cases she was not able to get answers to her questions because teachers refused to give them. She quit school because she wanted the freedom to be able to develop her own thoughts and ideas about the world.

On the other hand, Ann found that when she left school to work in a drugstore she could converse with customers and other employees. She found it enjoyable to have this freedom to not only discuss what she wished with whom she wished, but to question and search for answers at will. Ann concluded that she benifitted by quitting school, because she was able to grow outside of school in the manner she desired.

Ann also questioned the content of her education. She remembered little of her social studies and felt "school was like a fantasy. It just wasn't a real world." (1-2-3) She also felt it didn't give her the information she needed to function in the world. It taught her about Britain and the United States rather than Canada. It also taught her about the Black Plague instead of the Depression, the wars, and immigration into Canada (1-2-3).

She noted other people, particularly women she knew, who had quit school and had totally messed up lives because they did not have an education that prepared them to take their due place in society.

> In most of the cases, now, they're doing exactly what they did thirty years ago. They're still married, still going to bingo games, still relying on their husbands to think for them, and you know, living in their little worlds and you can't really relate to them (1-2-8).

Ann also noted these people did not know anything about current issues. Therefore, she concluded that education was simply making people into "robots." (1-4-8)

Don's dissatisfaction with his schooling was a result of a manipulative schooling which did not allow him to develop or express his own thoughts and ideas. He focused much of his attention on generally how the school, but particularly some teachers, did not allow students to express themselves and develop their own perspective on events and processes. Don had to learn what the teachers

told him; students didn't criticize the opinions of the teachers.

Part of Don's problem, he suggests, with schooling was a personality conflict with one particular teacher. In addition, he indicated that he could learn better from some teachers than others. Upon further reflection, Don again raised the problem of the teacher with whom he had a personality conflict. Don disagreed with this teacher's political perspective and the perpective of labour generally held by teachers which he felt was pro-management and anti-union.

> I resented being told what my political feelings were going to be, or if everyone's going to be mangement.... And the continual thing about the anti-union sentiment was always there (2-1-2,3).

The views of teachers included attacks on workers and the types of jobs done by people. Don explained this and the attitude he developed from this teaching.

> It was almost as if it was a crime that some-one should have to work for a living, like get their hands dirty or wear cover-alls.... And I guess I'm a little bitter about it (2-1-5,6).

Finally, Don felt the education he received put too much emphasis on learning about the United States. He stated that the texts were made in the United States and therefore expressed an American point of view (2-4-1). He became "resentful" of having to learn American history (2-1-13), and "turned off" because there was too much emphasis on learning about the United States (2-4-2). At

the same time, his education developed in him a desire to go and see what he was learning about (ie. the United States) (2-3-7).

Don felt manipulated by the school. He felt a lack of relevance in his education.

> Whether or not it [what is taught and what student's are examined on] has anything to do with outside life or whether or not the student retains it beyond that, I don't think is of any concern, necessarily, to the teaching profession (2-3-3).

The strict controls alienated him from school to the point where he did not put much effort into his last couple years of schooling. He just "didn't give a shit any more." (2-1-11)

Ron expressed a different perspective on schooling from the other two participants when he stated "he lost sight of the goal" (3-1-2) of his education - a job, money, and status. Therefore, he did not blame the education system for his lack of effort and achievement in high school. He evaluated his education by questioning whether it could have done much more for him. He asked, "In my situation, what do you deal with?" (3-1-6)

Ron expressed a desire to have been given more direction by the school. He explained the schools need to control students more in high school because they have not grown up yet. Therefore, they need a strong, guiding hand during this crucial, transition period in their lives. (3-3-16)

Ron criticized the school system from another perspective. He felt schools control students' thoughts, motivation, and achievement. This caused students to turn off to what was taught and not achieve as well.

Ron explained that a biased perspective was used in his social studies. A "capitalist" political perspective was used in teaching. Students only got one side of the story (3-4-19) which meant that you are "invalidating things" causing "irresponsibility," "rebelliousness," and a "lack of interest." (3-1-8) He also stated that relevance was lacking in his social studies, particularly anything to do with workers.

> Social studies never touched on daily life.... not reality, not really ... it never taught you what a normal working person's life is like and what you could expect (3-1-4).

The study participants did not see their schooling as part of their world in the sense that they were made to feel a part of what was happening. They did not feel that they could take some pride and ownership in the schooling project. Instead, they viewed schooling as part of another world, an <u>inhuman, alien world</u>. It was something to be shunned and despised.

A further aspect of individuality that seemed to be outside of student control was the subject matter studied and the interpretation that was given. The material studied at times did not seem to be important or relevant to the

participants. The lack of importance in the content of Social Studies was evidenced in that none of them readily remembered what they studied in it. Ron even forgot that he took Social Studies 20.

One can see the patterns of alienation emerging from the discussion of the curricula, materials, and methods of teaching used when these people went to school. One can also see the attempt to have students rely on "external authority" (Gonzalez, 1982, p. 147) and in doing so "undermine[s] their self-confidence and motivation." (1982, p. 148) The next two sections show other methods that were used which increased this problem.

Gender Stereotyping as Alienation

Willers states that teaching reinforces sex stereotyping and job segregation in the workplace (1984, p.12). However, this research does not show the programatic attack on the individuality of students based upon gender that is often a characteristic of our schools. This attack seems to be another method whereby the school undermined student self-confidence and motivation.

Ann gave the example of a lack of being recognized when she gave the answer at the end of the class period which she was determined to voice. The teacher recognized the answer in terms of the inability of another male student not giving it. Ann felt this was typical of how teachers dealt with

the fellows in the class, and how teachers were more receptive to the fellow's ideas.

Ann felt that gender stereotyping also can exist in terms of the direction that students are given for careers. She saw female students being encouraged to be homemakers; but, if they wanted to pursue a career, it was limited to things such as teaching and nursing. The school supported the society in having expectations that women would go into these occupations.

Ann felt a lack of subtleness in these encouragements. She explained that home economics was a standard course for women. Many things were taught with the understanding that these things were what women were to do in life. (ex. "get out of school, get married, have children, and look after her husband." (1-1-3) She concluded that this course was in fact what many of her school mates had followed (1-2-8).

Ann's case seems to strongly state that she lost some of her self-confidence due to the influences of what was taught in the school. These influences aided the process of alienating her from school to the point where she eventually quit. It also would seem to indicate that, while she has been able to escape the housewife syndrom, she has still been relegated to a working class job in somewhat the manner indicated by Willis.

The participants found the control of their individuality by the schools a major problem. Curricula,

teaching materials, teacher's political perspectives, and teaching methodologies were used to control students. The freedom to be able to question, develop, and learn as desired did not exist in the schools. This character of education seems to be similar to the factory system described by Bowles and Gintis (1976, p. 199).

Stratification as Alienation

Diverse perspectives exist on the relationship between schooling, and self-confidence and motivation as evidenced in the careers that students enter after school. Bowles and Gintis (1976) make the claim that the education system mechanistically reproduces a stratified society. This view seems to minimize the role of the individual in mediating between their own aspirations and the aspirations of parents, friends, school, and society.

Beck and Muia (1981) list several factors that affect students in terms of whether they stay in or drop out of school. Large urban or small rural school districts, belonging to racial minorities, and lower family socio-economic levels all increased student chances of being a drop out. What Beck and Muia don't is these factors at work, though these conclusions are supported by this research.

Gonzalez (1982) argues that schools reinforce the societal limitations placed upon students by their

socio-economic background. If one's parents are workers, one can anticipate that one will also be a worker. This view indicates the much more realistic view of how students find their place in society. It seems to generally be correct as far as the experiences of three participants described in this study.

Both Don and Ron attended schools in rural jurisdictions. Each raised the problem of poorer schooling opportunities in smaller schools that they had attended. Don felt very strongly about suffering from an education that had split classes, rotating curricula which forced him to take grade eleven subjects in grade ten, teachers that were close to retirement, and a counselling program that meant his teacher with whom he had a conflict was also his counsellor. There was also little career counselling. These situations set him back, he suggests, by making it more difficult for him because he became uncertain of his destiny. Don felt career counselling, for example, may not have directed him into another career, but that he may have gotten higher marks (2-2-10).

The uncertainty over career direction was also a problem for Ron. He also felt a lack of career guidance resulted in losing sight of his career goal. However, Ron also felt that there was not enough life direction in general from school. Some was a result of being in a smaller urban high school. He felt that his high school did

not offer many of the options that would have maintained student interest. Such things as his inability to take music and drama, he felt, hurt him in high school.

For some students, the transition from rural to urban living may be problematic. I found this with my education, moving into the city in grade nine. Free time had a different meaning; work had meant chores, now it meant working for a company; fads such as hair cuts, clothing styles, and jewellery were more important; and peer pressure in regard to smoking, drugs, gambling, dating, and drinking seemed much stronger.

Ron also found the transition from rural to urban life difficult. He moved into the city after grade 10. Coincidentally, his school marks began to fall. He did not like many things about the city and generalized his feelings about the city by referring to it as a "rat race." (3-3-5) Today, Ron enjoys visiting the city, but is not interested in living in it.

Beck and Muia (19810 pointed to a lower socio-economic status as affecting the dropout rate in schools. The socio-economic status of the three participants in this study seems to have affected their schooling. The attitudes of the participants as they related their schooling and family's socio-economic circumstances tells us much about the dynamic relationship between these aspects of student's lives.

Ann's father worked as a supervisor for CNR and her mother worked in a meat-packing plant. Ann remembered not having fashionable clothes and summer vacations away from home as had some kids. She was bothered by these things and stated that had she these things, she may have stayed in school.

Don grew up on a farm. He never questioned completing grade twelve. However, there was a prevailing view, either of Don's parents or the community, that to go into university meant being a "snob." (2-1-9) Therefore, university did not seem to be an option for Don at the time. Don desired to farm; however, this was not an option then or later because of the high start up costs.

The idea of university education did, however, touch a raw nerve in some of the participants. I grew up with a family-induced attitude of the importance of post-secondary education and improving one's social status. Concurrently, there was also instilled in me an attitude of remembering one's roots and maintaining contact with humbleness. This attitude struck resonance when Don recalled the teacher with whom he had a personality conflict. The teacher claimed that he was the only educated person in the community (2-2-6).

Ron's parents were both teachers. Ron felt that with his father getting a job with a provincial teachers' association, the family's status became "upper middle class"

(3-1-11) though monetarily he felt this wasn't the case. Of the three participants, Ron's family was the most wealthy and Ron attained the highest degree of education. In addition, Ron seemed to have the highest aspirations for his schooling, entering the pre-med program at university and now in the Bachelor of Education program.

A second aspect of family socio-economic status relates to how the school system treats people in relation to this status. All participants felt that there was a difference in the way students were treated based upon a family's socio-economic status. Ann was the only participant to relate a feeling of overt discrimination on this basis against herself. She indicated that she observed students being treated differently by the teachers based upon family's socio-economic status, with more recognition and reinforcement for the better students. She gave an example of the popularity of one girl whose family was prominent in the city because of the business they owned. This example was contrasted with the kids who lived in the river valley, whose parents did not even own their homes. The latter were blamed for anything that went missing and hauled into the principal's office (1-1-24).

Student dropout rates vary with the ethnic background according to Beck. It would seem that this situation can be generalized to include stratification occurring based upon ethnicity. One can see the historically discriminating

policy of the Canadian government in regards to immigration. For example, Chinese were brought to work on the railways and the Scandinavians encouraged into the West because they were thought to be good farmers.

In school, Ann also found that ethnicity was important. She felt treated like a native Indian due to her dark complexion. She also questioned what it would have been like for those immigrants from countries which had a "ski" (1-1-17) at the end of their names. Indirectly, she was suggesting that the discrimination against East Europeans, particularly recent immigrants was worse than what she suffered.

Ann found the discrimination against her difficult in another sense. She did not have a strong ethnic identity. Her parents had not taught her the Romanian language or customs. Thus, she could not relate to the Romanian culture to give herself strength, to support herself, or to defend herself.

It seems rather clear from the life histories of these participants that the factors affecting student achievement that were listed by Beck and Muia (1981) at the beginning of this section played an important role in the education of these participants. These factors affected the participants in terms of the self-confidence, motivation, and academic achievement by generally reinforcing the socio-economic

background of students as Gonzalez (1982) indicated happens in schools.

The precise consequences of this type of an education were different for each of these students. Generally, the three participants found themselves doing working class jobs. Therefore, one can conclude that the education each of the individuals received assisted in stratifying them.

Resistance

Student resistance to learning material that lacks relevance and to schooling that does not allow them any input was a reality for these participants. The effect of this resistance needs to be analyzed from two perspectives. First, one can look at student resistance to the schooling process and what this resistance meant to them. Second, it is important to see the role that resistance to schooling plays within society.

A host of literature bemoans the direction of the educational enterprise because of the manner in which students think and act in school and upon leaving it. Time (1980), for example, listed truancy, attacks on teachers, and drop outs as some of these causes for concern. These problems often become causes for counselling programs, adult literacy programs, or changes in curricula. What is not common in the literature is the view that these actions are resistance to an alienating experience, an inhuman and

undemocratic experience within an alienating institution. The acts of resistance to their schooling provided some of the meaning of schooling for the participants in this study.

Many forms and levels of resistance were used by the participants. One method of resistance used by the participants was not remembering what they considered to be unimportant. All three participants remembered little of their social studies courses. Another method of resistance was to put the minimum amount of effort into school work required to pass or to reach a desired goal. This form of resistance can be seen in Don's and Ron's effort in high school.

These forms of resistance seem to be passive; however, other active forms also existed. Ann began to resist by doing things her own way, for example making the short pajamas. She also tried to force the teacher to recognize her. However, she continued to find the doors closed to her. The teachers still controlled recognition and what was dealt with (ie. the curricula). She skipped classes and finally concluded that leaving school and entering the world outside of school offered her more in learning experiences than could the school.

Don's resistance to his schooling was tempered due to parental expectations that he would complete grade twelve. However, he resisted by developing an attitude whereby he "didn't give a shit any more." (2-1-11, 2-2-12) This

resistance translated into his reaction to the alien world of school whereby, he was physically in school but did not attempt to achieve. His general lack of motivation meant that he didn't get many of his grade twelve subjects.

Ron exhibited a similar kind of resistance to his schooling. After grade ten, his achievement went down considerably from being an honours student. He felt that school was just work and studying for exams was "too much effort." (3-1-3)

Willis (1977) argued that stratification occurs, in part, based upon one's attitude and perspective towards the schooling project. He showed how working class students who resisted the efforts of school to educate them, concurrently were relegating themselves to and preparing themselves for jobs in which resistance was common.

Don had a very strong resentment towards his education and strongly resisted it. He apprenticed as a mechanic and eventually became a heavy duty mechanic in a plant. Subsequently, he became involved with the new union there and rose to become a business representative, involved with the negotiation of contracts. His life experiences would seem to support Willis's theory that resistance prepares one for working class jobs.

Ron's situation initially seems to strongly support Willis's contention. Ron became very turned off with his

schooling. He works as a janitor and was involved in a lengthy and bitter strike with his present employer.

Ann developed a critical attitude towards schooling and many aspects of our society. She resisted school and also quit after grade 10. Despite this, she achieved the status of supervisor in her department of the government bureacracy though she still has a working class job.

Willis' argument does not, however, show the complete role that resistance plays in school or society. A Marxist interpretation envisions resistance to schooling as an aspect of the processes existing in the whole society. The two cannot be separated just as schools and society cannot be separated.

It would seem that the degree of resistance that these participants displayed was also based upon many things such as their socio-economic background, the degree of development of the productive forces and the production relations, the level of class antagonisms, and the level of development of organizations that can lead people to change their institutions or society (Waddington, 1974, p. 89). Therefore, one cannot make a factor such as Willis has discussed as absolute or take it in isolation from other factors such as these.

The factors listed by Waddington assist us in understanding the schooling experiences of the participants. Ron came from a higher socio-economic family background than

the other participants, yet has not himself achieved at the level of his father. He is unhappy and desires to climb the socio-economic ladder. His parent's socio-economic background have not reinforced strong resistance. Therefore, Ron maintained a dual explanation for this lack of achievement and disillusionment. He felt that the schools could have offered him some things that they didn't. At the same time, Ron blamed himself for losing sight of the goal of his education.

Ron has definite ideas about moving up the social ladder. Currently, he is working towards a Bachelor of Education degree. Therefore, he feels he must minimize his resistance so as not to suffer rejection by the state and ruling class.

Today, Ron also maintains an ambiguous attitude toward schooling and his education. At times he is very condemning, the next very evasive or even accepting. For example, he described the schools as teaching with a "capitalist" bias (3-4-19), while also defending them by stating that parents can also assist in teaching some of the things that schools do not. He commented, "Is it always supposed to fall ... [on] the school's head? What are the parents supposed to do?" (3-3-12) Ron also was ambiguous about student achievement and motivation. He listed the bias discussed above, amongst other things, as affecting student achievement. He also stated that some students are

born to achieve, while other have an innate lack of motivation (3-3-1).

Ann concluded that she has achieved what she had <u>because</u> she left school. She also felt that she was able to gain much of her knowledge of Canada and world issues outside of school. Her belief in active resistance to alienation continued outside of school by talking to women at work about various social issues. Ann was also actively involved for several years in a civic reform organization.

One would also have to view the struggle of students against schooling as an element of the struggle going on in society against an alienating environment. The degree of resistance also relates to the level of development of organizations dedicated to changing society (Waddington, 1974, p. 89). This perspective of resistance would explain Ron's involvement in radical politics, Don's active involvemnt in the New Democratic Party, and Ann's involvement in a civic reform organization. These actions directed toward change in society need to be related to the acts of resistance in school and vice versa.

One can view resistance in several ways. In one respect, it may be viewed as the subjective choice of people who desire to rebel against something. From another perspective, resistance may be the result of objective factors at work that condition the way people live and respond to processes and events.

> Consciousness does not determine life, but life determines consciousness (Marx, German Ideology quoted in Singer, p. 30).

The latter view of resistance can best explain the role and level of resistance in schools and society of these participants.

Possibilities for Change

The experiences of the participants in this study point towards the need for change in schools that would have provided them with an education of a different sort from what they received. Possible changes were a vital part of the conversations and came from the analysis of the negative experiences of the participants in school. In an attempt to understand the schooling experience, the participants counterposed ideas concerning democratic and human educational alternatives to their dehumanizing personal experiences.

These participants indicated that a crisis exists in our schools. However, one can find much of the same questioning in much of the educational research that is presently being published (Beck and Muia, 1981; Bibby and Posterski, 1985). The comments of the participants in this study indicate that the problems in our schools are much more complex than simply requiring a piecemeal change of curriculum, offering of new programs, or changing teaching methodology discussed in much of the educational theorizing

As the conversations evolved, it became increasingly clear that a solution such as obtaining a better fit between people and society through minor reforms in program or practice was not the considered approach to eliminating alienation in schools. All three participants pointed to a government that, from their experience, desired an educational system of the type that presently existed. They pointed out that the changes they perceived as necessary would require a radical change in the government's approach to people and to education.

In analyzing the changes needed in the education system, the participants seemed to reject the belief that people could somehow become consciencized by the schools such that they could in turn change the society. Their attitude of the government being in control of education and being the obstacle to educational reform, tempered their optimism of any kind of change for the better in education. Don voiced skepticism of the potential for radical, fundamental change in schooling by stating that the AFL had attempted to influence curriculum development with no success. He thought that if individual teachers attempted to do something unilaterally that, "You may be .... treated the same as Keegstra" by the educational authorities (2-3-16).

Ann questioned how we can offer a more humanitarian social and political consciousness through our education if

the government is going the other way. She felt that the schools and government are and will continue to cater to the rich (1-3-12). Ron concluded that a humanitarian government that is more interested in people than money and doesn't perpetuate inequality needs to be in power before changes of the sort discussed could be implemented. He felt that political involvement and the raising of political consciousness was the route needed to pursue these goals (3-4-18).

Ann and Don pointed to some positive changes in the relationship of students and teachers and the acceptance of beliefs other than those of the teacher. However, Ann and Ron pointed out that they thought the government was presently moving even further away from the desired reforms (1-3-11,12; 3-4-6).

It seems clear from the participants that there is a strong doubt about the possibility of obtaining changes in our education without first having a change in government. Some of the participants seemed to indicate the need for an even more fundamental change in society to be able to move away from alienation which exists in the schools and the larger society. Don, for example, lists "capitalism" (2-3-11,12) as being the problem. Without more fundamental change in society, he suggests, changes in the schools do not seem feasible.

Towards Improved Education

This thesis has presented the life histories of three workers who suffered through an alienating school experience. They pointed to many factors in school as causing that alienation: favoritism in teacher attitudes, anti-labour material and curricula , teaching methodologies which didn't recognize students, non-Canadian material, lack of issues being discussed, and out-dated material to name but a few. Each felt that the school played some role in causing them to lose their motivation to achieve at school. Each felt differently about the role that their schooling has had in their lives since then. However, each saw schooling as an important part of their lives and of the lives of young people. This important aspect of schooling was one reason for their interest in schooling and in this project.

The interest in this project resulted in four probing conversations with each participant. The conversations with each participant allowed each of us to try and understand our school experiences in light of the relating and sharing of those experiences. This method of recording those experiences allowed me to re-examine my school experiences as a student and as a teacher, and also to re-examine my hypothesis regarding those experiences.

Initiallly, I focused on the problem in the social studies curriculum. I had hypothesized that the development of a unit on labour for the social studies curricula would be a major step in resolving a problem of relevancy. Each participant played a role in directing my attention beyond this item.

The problem with school social studies quickly turned into a discussion of schooling. The problem of relevancy was turned into a discussion of the alienating experiences in the school and some of the problems we face in society. Don burst my bubble in regard to my thoughts of a labour studies unit by suggesting that labour's perspective should exist in each unit of the social studies courses in school (2-3-15).

Each of the participants commented on the teaching methodology and forced me to consider this important aspect of schooling. Ann opened the conversation by relating the way she was treated. She showed the importance of considering the role of the teacher and the mannner in which we deal with students. Ron and Don went further and suggested that experiencial learning was important and should be incorporated in teaching.

The three participants challenged me to focus my attention on much more than the social studies curricula. They questioned the role of schools in society, as they are

and as they could be. They induced me to seek a solution to an alienating schooling in an alienating society.

Clearly, the participants viewed the struggle for educational reform as important. The suggestions for reform that permeated the conversations point to this. Also, experiences in other parts of Canada indicate that modest success is possible in the struggle for curricular reform. Ontario, for example, has a unit on labour taught in its schools (see Holmes, 1976). Therefore, one should not shut the door on this possiblity. In fact, it is key to be able to pave the way to understanding and making educational reform which will provide a relevant education for working class, native, women and other students from groups who suffer from an alienating education.

However, the changes needed to succeed in the elimination of alienation needs more drastic action. The participants pointed the way forward by resisting institutionalized educational goals and opening the door to change. Each participant is or was a member of an organization that sought to change society. Organizing, building consciousness, and further study of the means and possibilities for educational and social change are key to the elimination of alienation. They are also an implicit part of providing students with a human and democratic

> Education is not the art of training and subjugating people to serve the profit of others. It is the art of helping people to know themselves, to develop the resources of judgement and the skills of learning and the sense of values needed in facing a future of unpredictable change, to understand the rights and responsibilities of adults in a democratic society, and to exercise the greatest possible degree of control over their own fate (Goble, 1984, p. 11).

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APPENDIX A

Government statistics can be used to gain some understanding of the magnitude of the Canadian working class. According to Statistics Canada in its publication Canada Year Book 1978-79, 10,308,000 people were direct members of the civilian labour force in Canada in 1976 (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1978, 342). This figure includes people who are 15 years of age or over, but excludes the Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories, Indian reserves, members of the armed forces, overseas households, and inmates of institutions. The civilian labour force includes highly paid managerial workers and farmers. It excludes 6,565,000 people (p. 361) of whom over 600,000 were students (p. 227).

The civilian labour force figure does not include dependents. Therefore, the participation rate of 61.1 percent (p. 361) of the Canadian population in the civilian labour force does not present the reader with true quantitative dimensions of the Canadian working class. However, taking into consideration the comments made here, one can obtain some idea of the magnitude of the working class in Canada.

APPENDIX B

113 Kingsfield Village
Leduc, Alberta
T9E 3J1
July 4, 1984

Dear Mrs.

I am a teacher who is completing a Master's Degree in Education at the University of Alberta. My research is on the relationship between workers and the Alberta Social Studies Curriculum (see attached list of proposed research questions). I would like to have you participate in a series of "dialogues" with me concerning this issue and will contact you in the near future with more details.

Thank-you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to working with you on this project.

Sincerely yours,

Gary Hansen

Gary Hansen

APPENDIX C

Specific Research Questions

1. What is the meaning of the school experience for the worker?
2. Specifically, what was the social studies experience like for the worker?
3. How did the school experience relate to the meaning of work for his/her self, family, and immediate community?
4. In retrospect, what kind of relationship does there seem to be between the way that labour is portrayed in the curriculum and its meaning in his/her life now?
5. What effect has this relationship had?
6. How might this relationship be changed?
7. How does the current Alberta Curriculum portray work?
8. What would be the outcome of this portrayal for working people?

APPENDIX D

I don't know whether I'd make the same statements today. Probably the frame of mind I was in. The frame of mind that was developed during the conversation because I don't know that that statement's completely true or whether

Q. That's the statement concerning the screening process and as people go on to manual labour if they are rebels or ...

A. That's right - its just a strange way of looking at that particular aspect of it. I don't know that I agree with it, because I think there were some people that did fit in with the "rebels" category that did'nt progress beyond just the high school level of education. For the most part I guess why I did say that was because it was almost fell into the category of 'suck holes' that did go beyond and they were the ones that were kind of 'yes ' people.

the financial and social elite went on to University.

Q. Yes, I've seen other people come out with this kind of statement and personally I don't believe its absolutely correct but I think there is a fair element of truth to it. If you're from a working class family its going to be very difficult for you to go on and achieve great things in life, in terms of establishment, in terms of becoming management or in terms of owning a business and that kind of thing. I think its very difficult and people that have more money, that come from wealthier families, kids know how to operate within the system, they're going to be the ones who are going to 'suck hole' or are going to have the facilities - (the computers at home) that they can get into technology and go on to university and I think its true that when it comes to education there's an element of 'has it and is going to keep it' and if he doesn't 'have it' he's not going to.

A. I don't know whether its such a factor today but when I was oging to high school I know that because of the almost poverty conditions that existed at that time that it was only those that were fairly affluent that could afford the students going to the city. It was a long way to go and at that time Calgary didn't have a University so Edmonton was the only place and that took a lot of planning nad a lot of financial arrangements for these students to go to university so maybe that's that association that's sticking in my mind, looking and knowing that it was the affluent and those that were fairly well to do and even up on the social ladder that did proceed and that's where I'm getting this concept. And its a stigma that once you're on the bottom of the society that you just don't proceed beyond that. You stick with it and I saw that basically that those from the same socio-economic group that I was from - that we didn't go to university. It was the that was really breaking out of the system.

Qç. I know it was the same even with my family. You know, small farmers and my sister had the potential in terms of brains to go to university. Generally, she had done well throughout school and my parents just didn't have the money to put up for her univesrity, so she didn't she took one year business course and became a secretary and that was the direction she had to limit herself. Now she's going to university. She's going into education but its now when the kids have grown up and things are a little easier for her to get into university relative to that time.

A. Something that just comes to mind though, you speaking of your sister reminds me. My older brothers and sisters had to stay home after about grade 7 or 8 to help my parents raise the family and to help on the farm. And I guess probably there would have been not just a little resentment but probably a lot of resentment in respect to anyone younger than them going on to univesity. Like it was adequate that they went to highschool, finished highschool. When they had to stay home and raise the family. And I know there was a lot of resentment from my older sister who was still at home helping raise young children, the younger memers of the family after nine, and those immediately younger than her, like they're still my older brothers and sisters but they were going out and working and she was stuck at home. So she really got into bit of a rut and resented it.

Q. I've seen that in a lot of families, where the oldest kid and that's typical on the farm as far as I'm concerned, when they get old enough to look after the younger ones, are in charge of them, and have the total responsibility for them and I know family was that way and the oldest kids because they feel cheated somehow really are resentful lots of time on their upbrining. That raises a question too of when these people have those responsibilities virtually of an adult, you know, how they view their schooling then. You know, they're studying about the kings and queens of England and all this kind of stuff and here they are on the other hand go home and they've got the responsibilities of virtually an adult. You can see the real contradication there.

A. That's right. You see all this affluence on one sector and then...

Q. I wanted to go on and talk a little about the whole thing about what schools are teaching students. You know, we talked a little about the school cramming kind of thing - cramming for exams and stuff and it raised a question in my mind that - you raised the question of that retention isn't important at all. You cram for the exam and after the exam's over you can forget it or you can do what you like with the information. Usually it is forgotten. What is that whole process. What is it leading to in terms of teaching? I just wondered what your impression of that would be.

Teachers and students work for "rewards"

A. I haven't really done a follow through on thinking that through. Like what my opinion is of the long term effects on the students is I have some concerns not vocal concerns about my own children and their cramming for exams. It concerns me because it seems that the exams are only there to be the final decider as to whether or not the students are fit for outside life or that they have I guess learned some special things from the teacher. I just want go back a little bit I guess. I can understand the teachers wanting students ot have good marks on exams so really what they do is they teach whats on the exams so that the end result is that they get a favorable report. Whether or not it has anything to do with outside life or whether or not the student retains it beyond that I don't think it is of any concern necessarily to the teaching profession. It may be to individual teachers but the education system doesn't promote that. It only promotes what they can trasnlate or transfer out of their heads and put onto paper. Some of it probably is retained and some of it is probably being retained without the students even knowing this. Ten years down the road in life something will trigger a topic that they recall from school. But I think, you know, there's too much emphasis being put on final exams and the education system has gone that way even further now. With the latest statement of the terms used that the finals mark determines whether or not you get into university - based on the last three years in high school. I don't know what that term is.

Departmental exams determine who goes on to University.

Q. Well, they've got diploma exams I think, Matric exams, there's a whole battery of different exams.

A. King just introduced something in the last two years -[departmental finals?] Yeah, departmental finals I guess and it reviews the past three years, does it not? That's the mark that determines whether or not they can go into higher education.

Just to pass an exam ... other than know the material.

Q. I'm not too sure if it reviews the last 3 years or if its the last year, the final course, but the point is that they do compose I think it 50% of the final mark so 50% is from that exam and 50% is from the teacher. It seems to me that's the way its organized. But the point is that its a lot [redacted] relying on that one exam. The teacher's mark is probably or may be through from the whole course throughout out the year - different assignments and tests. That mark is from the department of education is that one exam so you're right there, that its a big cramming process that's going on. - studying for that one exam

A. There's so much pressure being put on the student to make it or break it on that particular exam rather than a total evaluation of the individual.

Lougheed government directing education to allow top students to university to go on to become corporate managers and leaders of country.

Q. I think you're right when you question the whole point of the curriculum that there could be anything in there. It could be complete garbage and it doesn't have to have anything with reality. And the kids will be motivated to study that curriculum only because they want to pass the course. There's nothing intrinsic in that curriculum that has to hold the students there. And it can be absolute lies and they'll learn it because they have to pass that test to go on to whatever, be it NAIT or SAIT or university or college and that seems to be a real crime in that respect. But what I wonder too is some of the effects. It looks like they- are more interested just in that end of selecting. It seems something like a selecting process as opposed to anything to do with really education at all. You know, that they're really trying to get that 5% or whatever that can go on to university and everybody else below is slotted into some kind of jobs based on what they do. The next section, the next 10% may go on to NAIT and say, the next 10% may go on to some college and eerybody below that is if you take highmost.

A. And I can see that this particular administration is I guess similar to what's happening with education in the provincial jurisdiction. The Lougheed administration I can see can be predicting and looking forward to the very top students only being the ones allowed into university because ultimately they will become the management in the corporations and the leaders of the country.

Q. And they're the ones that know the loopholes and how to jump through them

Q As you said earlier the ones that have 'suck holed' and made sure of things.

A. Maybe I'm going to have to do a reconsideration of what I said here

Q. The other thing was this whole question of some of the things that possibly could be done in our society to make sure that there's a balanced curriculum and workers' view is presented. I'm talking about some of the things Dave had mentioned setting up a joint committee of the AFL and PTA. Develop that committee so that there's community groups put on to that.
I could see the government reacting to something like that [negatively] Probably negatively, but on the other hand they are probably going to if it was representative enough maybe they would have to give some consideration or some concession to that committee. You know if it really represented some of the public groups out there that had some powers and clout.

A. What you're saying is a committee with a bit of pressure, an advisory committee to the education system. I can see that that would have a lot of merit, at least that would have, could be the vehicle concerns like I have, for that to be expressed. I'm probably as much to blame as anyone because I didn't attend PTA meetings

I'm not sure that that's an appropriate vechile for expressing the concerns that I have. For all intents and purposes this is the first time I've told anyone who I think stands a chance of doing something about it.

Q. PTA meetings, are, one of the big things they do right now is in my personal opinion, one of the biggest functions - that's at my wife's school, they had a bingo - got approval from I think it was the Knights of Columbus to have a bingo - got that crowd out and they raised between 5-7 thousand dollars and they bought computers for the school.

A. Thats how they're supplying things.

Q. Thats right, that's how schools are getting their equipment. I'll give you an example from my own school. The students union - there's no PTA - so the students union is the big fund raiser. They raised last year, I think about 5,000 it seems to me, some place in there. And, what they did now, is they by equipment for the school, basicaly with that money. They also do things like go on their ski trip - they have a once a year ski trip- the kids feel more direct benefit. But you see all of the things is basically they're raising money for the school. They also bought two computers for the school. So you see what the whole school system is becoming. Its becoming just about like a business. It has to raise money to finance itself.

A. Well, I would agree with you that the school system - that those kinds of meetings aren't. That question brings to mind a little saying I saw in someone's office where it said 'wouldn't it be nice if the school systems took all the money they needed and the military had a bake sale to buy a bomb.

Q. I've seen that too, and that's the honest truth. You know, there is no question about it. You go into any school system in, probably in Alberta and the ones that have the best equipment , the best programs, will be the ones that have very developed financing system or a system to raise finances.

A. So the PTA is no longer a system for parents to have input as far as children are concerned.

Q. Well, I can give you another example. Last year they didn't have, at my wife's school, it isn't organized that way. They had a meeting and there was all kinds of complaining, you know, bitching about the whole administration in the school. And this year they got that group on fund raising. The minds are on raising funds, not on what's happening in the school. You see its also, besides financing the school, those groups are also getting their minds taken off actually what is happening in school. You know in the sense of possibly the curriculum or the discipline and so forth. So its serving a double purpose.

A. And its been very devious in the way its come about. The parents are probably feeling very good about raising all this money for this but they don't know that eventually thats the only way that school will have any money. What a terrible situation. I didn't realize it had degenerated to that.

Q. And like I said, I think you go to any school in Alberta and you'll find that same kind of things that there is at least some raising of money by students or by community groups for the school.

A. And that's for basic school equipment that isn't for field trips or anything like that?

Q. Well, some is basic school equipment, like I said the computers in both our schools and I mean that's needed to run a computer program because computer programs are becoming virtually compulsory, they are becoming options, but compulsory options a school should offer. And how do you run a computer program in a school if you've got 2 or 4 computers and you've got 22 kids in a class. You need probably a minimum of between 7 and 15 computers. So you see, there's the pressure there, the administration has to do these things so they get this equipment. And its basic equipment as far as I'm concerned. But I mean even things like field trips. To me that should be a basic thing. It's not considered to be a basic thing in school but it should be a basic thing in a school. As far as I'm concerned, every year should have the opportunity to go once, say cross-country and downhill skiing. Because sports is so important as a part of our lives, and becoming more important and recognized so - well, how do you get kids out there or when they become adults get them out there involving themselves with sports if they've never had the opportunity to try in high school?

A. That is something that never happened in my experience. We never went skiing, if I can remember in all the years in school we made one trip to Banff, but then again,.. transportation was a much different system then.

Italian children are involved in their culture.

Q. Yes, that's an interesting point in your ..

A. Everywhere we went there was just busloads and busloads of kids at all the popular sights - this was Italy particularly. On our way back from, we'd gone to ~~Banff~~, on our way back we stopped at a town Aost that's what they called it. We called it Aosta . But it was a high mountain village and they grew a lot of grapes there but we didn't go on through the first time on our way down. We thought it was a very poor town. On our way back it was an opportune time for us to stop and have a rest because we had really been pushing ourselves - we had our own vehicles so we could pick and choose where we stopped. We stayed there for two days and it wasn't a poor village at all, it wasn't a poor city, but it was interesting to see the total involvement of the Italian kids in their culture. I was

very uncomfortable because it was so noisy. They were well disciplined but they didn't know how to speak to one another in a civil tone, they had to talk to kids ten rows behind them. It was disrupting to us but they were having fun and they were learning something about their country. And that brings to mind the other thing - like I'm very conscious when I go to a restaurant and turn over the silverware and see where its made, and the plates if they're made in Japan I'll look. And I looked in Italy and everything - like they are proud of their country - was made in Italy. Their silverware, their china, everything.

Travel is important as a education. If children aren't given ... education, it will mean the demise of the country.

Q. But you know this whole point of having kids and going on field trips and everything. One can understand this whole situation when - and this is another statistic I just saw this week I think it was whereby it was pointed out that Canada amongst the industrialized countries in the world, spends the least on social services of any of them. We spend less in terms of our % of GNP on social services than even the United States. Its less than most western industrialized countries. This was in the Edmonton Journal. So you can see why our kids aren't going and touring Canada, seeing a little bit more of Canada and stuff like that and being proud of our country.

A. I guess that goes back to what the curriculum in the social studies course is, they don't teach you much about Canada - like there's nothing interesting here. They don't have much history but there's something to see here, even going, and finding out how those people live, that would be an education in itself. But yet that isn't encouraged. I know, my dream was ... to the States, see what I learned about. Its a pathetic situation. Really I think the country, the demise of the country is in the children. ... looked after. In restrospect I can see that the Italians are looking after their kids. I don't really think it's a healthy thing.

Canadian history eliminate controversial elements.

780- Q. I think you probably find that even in most of western Europe, that that is the case, or maybe Europe as a whole, or maybe in Eastern Europe, that people look after their kids, they spend a lot of time and there's a lot of money spent on kids to develop them. Something else too that I wanted to pick up on that you just said about our history in terms of study. I think there's two things. I think this idea of say field trips can be put together with some of that history. I think we've got here in Canada there's large elements of very exciting history and I think that a lot of that history is covered up. For example, I don't know if you've ever read about the ... in Newfoundland. ... Indians. That still intrigues me and I personally wish I had more time to do something. The Indians were completely and absolutely wiped out by early Canadians. They were hunted like animals in fact, because the Indians had a philosophy where they considered everything that was around kind of community property and so when the first fishermen came there and they did their cleaning and stuff on

land before they took the fish back to Europe and left the nets there to dry and so on. Well the came in and according to our values, they stole it, these nets and stuff. But all they were doing was borrowing it with the intention it would be returned and so these fishermen of course didn't know what was going on, they thought it was being stolen and so they started on this whole procedure of hunting down everyone of the and they would shoot them in mass. It was mass murder, is what it was. And the last one, it was a girl, that died, I think it was in the 1930s, the last one, and she had written some about her history and - they were exterminated. And this is part of our history or one other very fine example that I can think of is the whole thing to do with the NOrthwest rebellions the 1885 and 1860 rebellions and thats within driving distance away from where we are right here, you know, in souther Alberta and in the Alberta Saskatchewan border. Some tremendous history of some import went on connected to the whole building of the railroad, one of the reasons why the railroad was built, one of the reasons why the rebellions were so successfully put down you know, tremendous linkages with major kind of issue building projects in Canada and this is some of the stuff we can very easily be studying in our curriculum but its minimized and for example, the Beothuk proably would be hard pressed to find it in any of the textbooks or any of the curriculum throughout even the high school social studies.

A. Well its probably because it would categorized as dirty linen. Its very anti-Canadian to air that kind of thing.

Experential learning at the det. even if a smaller area is covered This is at least retained.

23 - Q. But that what I'm getting at - if there's interest and if there's money you can bring both these things together. You can have field trips and kids interested in our history and that kind of stuff. And personally, as I said, I feel its a very interesting history. And then on the other hand, you can have even interesting history books. We're always told our history is dull and stuff like that.

A. What my wife teaches is life skills and something that is really become obvious to me even though I've never been through a life skills program, but they call it experiential learning. There's no textbook, its just ~~a way of~~ audiovisual and that's just among themselves, they'll play back what they have gone through, pick holes in it and then the group really work among themselves. What my wife maintains is that through lecture you don't learn anything. There's very little retention and I guess that probably really to me, exemplifies the need for students to cram. Like if they had learned it when it was being taught there would be no need ot cram. Its experiential learning. There's no need to cram because you've learned it. You may not have covered the same kind of area but of what value is it to cover a big area if nothing is retained.

no notes

Q. I agree with you that experiential learning is probably the best learning that a person can do and of course we can't have everything learned by experience but I think this is what I'm trying to suggest here, is that if the two go together - if you have experiences tied together with experiences of visiting that place or seeing something to do with that, then you go back in to the classroom and you study about that kind of thing. I think you've got a powerful learning tool.

A. Well the other thing that just comes to mind is one group visiting one area and another group visiting another and exchanging what they've seen.

Q. How can you have kids actually learning about anything about Canada if they can't even conceptualize what Ottawa means, what a parliament building is if they haven't seen it or something like that.

A

Well if they pay any attention to election campaigns ~~cut here~~ a federal election they wouldn't have a very good image of what Ottawa is because its based on 'fed bashing'.
[thats right] And there's that east-west split. It would be good to get the students exchanged on a much broader basis and find out that these people are humans there too and they are taught to hate the west.

Social services cut to put more into corporate pockets.

Q. Exactly the same problems - only a different slant on them. I think that's important. I think thats a good point. What'll happen, I don't know. It all comes back to costing money. And the unwillingness to spend any more money on social serices or on education.

A. They have cut back on social services and education. And I think its for ulterior motives.

Q. You heard the offer yesterday to Suncor, of ½ billion dolalrs, I think - no it was ½ a million dollars that Suncor spent on the expansion of the plant. They were going to offer a tax concession of I think it was 42 million this year, they were going to offer some money previously to taking tax and they were going to offer this concession permanently. So permanently, from now on they'll get 42 million more than they would have before as amenable and then they'll get money from back aways plus then probably have some other tax concessions to build a plant, like the government throws in

A. This is done in such a way as the public is not perceiving it to be a giveaway type thing. Its a tax concession and it'll have to be tax or negative tax. Its a terminology they use to deceive people and yet we have no vested interested - or financial interest in the operation. We have no say as how to operate it.

Q. Exactly. It was funny, I listened, - this was I think last night or the night before - to reporting of this on the news. The wording - exactly the wording - that Suncor would use if they were making a press announcement. The wording was such that this would allow Suncor to go ahead with their bulding plans. It didn't say anything that the government was giving this money so that Suncor could go ahead or was giving a tax concession. It was not in the perspective of the government or of course, obviously not a perspective form the workers. It was really worded incredibly pro-Suncor.

A. Well, coming from the Mulroney administration, it comes as no surprise to me. Its intersting when you - the big think I gather from that press release, and I didn't see it personally - was the creation of 150 permenent jobs. That's an awful price to pay for 150 jobs.

Q. Of course, they threw in there that it created so many man years of labor. I guess construction and all this you now, and it all sounds impressive, but what it comes down to is yes, this 150 jobs it actually creates, these people won't earn that kind of money in a lifetime, much less pay the taxes. I don't know what year it was - I believe it was '82 , it could have been as late as 1983, that there was a negative tax for corporations in Alberta. That doesn't mean that all corporations did not pay income tax in this province or receive money - it just menas that some got a lot. THere was 171 million dollars, I believe the figures were in payments to corporations in Alberta in excess of what corporations paid for income tax.

Q. I remember hearing that same thing too. And then you look at the statistics of who is increasingly facing the tax burden and its increasing I think about every year for the last several years its that working people are paying higher taxes and the corporate sectors of taxation is going down.

A. And theres fewer workers to pay that tax money.

Q. Just as I was coming over th[illegible]re talking about the family allowance and some other social programs that they're considering cutting and they are saying that the prime sector should pay more taxes on this or they should not get these programs or 26-41 thousand a year earners which is middle income earners, middle - in my books probably 26,000 is starting to get even into the lower income because on 26,000 if you've got one family earning that I would say its virtually impossible to own a house

A. You won't qualify for a mortgage. And thats the income sector that they're looking at.
What happens to those above the 41,000?

Q. I guess they get to go on their way as usual and they've got good enough accountants or can afford good enough accountants to get it written off again.

A. Its interesting too, when you talk about that how the Mulroney administration is going to set up seminars for corporations on how to use the tax system to their advantage. At the same time put something like 700 people on staff to police UIC recipients to make sure they're not screwing the system.

Students are taught to strive for jobs in top management of multi-nationals.

Q. You can see direct who they're interested in helping [abolutely] but you know what even gets me and this is something that I've learned recently is that in terms of job creation its small business that are the biggest job creators (they employ mor people , yes) they employ and with every dollar that's spent they will employ more people than a large corporation because a large corporation is involved in high tech [and mass production] and employ less as a result. Yet there's nothing, or virtually nothing for the small businessman. That's really incredible to me.

A. And you know, unreal as it may seem, people or students are expecting that they will be out and working for these big multi-national corporations and they will be the top management in their area. That's always the end of the rainbow for them. Thats the pot of gold. And really that's what I recall being taught - whether it was said directly or indirectly - thats the message - that the end of the rainbow, that pot of gold was to be management - top management. And it encourages to screw everyone you can just to get there. It doesn't matter how you get there. Its the end result that counts.

Q. That's why in some ways it seems to me, you know from what you've said and from what I've observed that our education system is virtually, just absolutely pushing the free enterprise philosophy and just like brainwashing our kids.

A. Well, I'm not angry at free enterprise, because thats really what the small businessman is. Its the capitalist society that I disagree with. Capitalism and communism are extreme opposite ends to one another. One's as bad as the other. And sure as hell neither one of the systems is for the small guy. The bulk of the people that live in the country. And you know, in no way can anyone ever say that I've been anti-free enterprise. Its the capitalist system thats screwing everybody. And it invariably screws the guy thats really encouraging it too- the guy at the top of the system because when it become opportune for these multi-nationals to dump the president of the company in Canada - he's gone and they don't think twice. He's just a statistic as far as they're concerned. He's history. And if they put someone in a top position, who doesn't do as the board of directors directs or doesn't produce as they feel he should, they'll put somebody in who they think will. Forget about him, dump him back on society - let the welfare system look after him. Let society look after him. They've used him.

The disposable society has been carried to its extreme.

Q. I think though, what I was getting at is that its the philosophy of these top companies , top corporations and people working in them that seems to be the thing presented in the schools, you know there's not anything but that it seems to be presented. Like you said, the people should strive for the top for those kind of top management positions or whatever and this is the whole thing thats being pushed in our schools, that that is te best that we can have. To do that kind of thing.

A. Free enterprise is an ideal situation but unfortunately monopolies or corporations - multi-national corporations just do nothing but flourish under it.

Q. Yes, we should say I suppose, monopoly Capitalism is what it is because there's no semblance of free enterprise in the society- not when you have top corporations monopolizing everything they can.

A. Well, what happens, is multi-nationals with all their money, if there's anyone out there that's in competition with them, they'll either merge or buy them.

Q. A perfect example of what's happening now with Sunday opening. I guess all the small store owners - even these chains are just about monopoly chains - like 7-11 and Macs and so on, but are owned by individuals I guess they-re just being all cleaned right now. Obviously no-ones going to go the 7-11 and spend 10% more on purchasing something when they can buy it at the safeway or the Food Barn for say 20-30% less. But anyway thats a good example of what we're talking about.

A. yes, really, the 7-11 owners - talking about the corporate owners, aren't suffering. Its the little that has bought the corner store to make a living that buys his merchandise through the multi-national chain.

Canada's branch plant economy is reflected in our curricula.

Q. I assume that probably what you've got in that situation is they pay a franchise fee and they have to every month pay a certain minimum kind of tax, probably not on volume but payment to have that franchise. and so any squeeze that comes its the actual owner, the small businessman that's hurt and not the top guy.
But what I'm getting at is this is what's taught in our school system, is not anything to do with the philosophy of the small businesman or the philosophy of say Canadian nationalism, or the philosophy of a worker but its that philosophy of that top strata in Canada that is being totally promoted.

A. Unfortunately though, we're talking about the top strata in Canada. Anything that the corporation structure, the corporation, they're told from somewhere outside out boundaries just what their position is here. Really what they are - is this country is a branch plant operation. And we pay people to come in and take our natural resources and exploit us. And unfortunately I think its reflected in the curriculums.

Curriculum should encourage students to read and study more about labour. Students must be encouraged to read these books.

Q. Are there any other things that you could suggest that could be done in terms of possibly influencing curriculums or even secondly changes in terms of the curriclum or changes that could be recommended to the school system. Like another good one you had is libraries. Getting labour materials into libraries.

A. Libraries may be a portion of the answer. The most important part is to have the exposure in class. To have a book set on the shelf doesn't mean its going to be viewed. They have to be encouraged - there has to be some incentive for them to pick up that book. If what they're being taught is capitalistic, free enterprise and all this other good stuff they promote. You can have labor books up there, they may be viewed by some of them, but the bulk of the people to pick up a book that they've got some identify with. They have had their appetite wetted. That isn't to say that I disagree with these labour books being there but I think the curriculum has to reflect some of that content and get the interest there.

Talking in classrooms by labour leaders, etc

Q. How could that be done specifically? Do you have any ideas?

A. I suppose in part what Don was talking about this morning is people from organized labor going out and speaking to classrooms and I think just a different slant going on how labour is perceived. There just is not enough attention paid to really what the working stiff is all about. Its the glamorous high paid jobs that are concentrated on. That like how many people can be president of Imperial Oil of Canada. [its got to be quite small] but yet that's what everyone's striving for - climb this ladder of success and it doesn't matter whose fingers you step on. But by the time these people have climbed this ladder of success and on their way back down they're having to deal with the people they've stepped on. They've learned their lesson, but what value.

A balanced point of view should be presented in the curriculum. This includes presenting labour in creative ways.

Q. Of course there's always someone to replace them if they start coming down and its the guy that's moving up his ideas - but what would - would it be, besides having people coming into the schools - either representatives from the unions or elected people from the unions and I suppose things like listing resources. resources people, resources as far as lists of unions and people willing to go out to the schools, specifically in the curriculum - could there be some things - changes that could be made or recommended to be made?

A. Well, I'm not totally familiar with the way the schools are using - the teaching methods that are at their disposal - now what I'm talking about audiovisual — whether thats a popular thing, but there's got to be a lot of programs that are available through tapes and movies and that type of thing that would portray a different point of view towards — I'm going to use that 1919 Winnipeg Strike again. I know that there are some movies out there and film clips on - labour's point of view, what happened there, or the people that were on strike - their point of view. And I think that anything that is one extreme has to be counter balanced with something that isn't necessarily another extreme but another point of view. And I still firmly believe, I had a very negative attitude towards those people in Winnipeg until such time as I became involved in the Labour Movement and I found out what the hell it was all about.

Q. How about things like units - do you think that that would be a valid way to present this? A unit outling, say, labour's perspective on a number of different things - outlining something to do with what you suggested negotiations must be a part of something that kids learn. What unions have done in Canada - would a unit be something that from your perspective would be good.

A. Well I'm not understanding your definition or terminology with respect to 'unit'.

Labour should be presented in every facet of the curriculum

Q. Well, like in social studies virtually every grade, I think, except grade 12, kids take three units on different topics, or different themes, for example - the next unit I'll be teaching grade 8 social studies - one on Africa and underdevelopment. And theres a third one on Canadian Institutions and I thought in terms of Canadian institutions that it would be a perfect time and a perfect opportunity to deal with the institution of organized and to have a unit that kids could study at that level. In fact they do have other institutions yet and I was looking at this not too long ago and I can't remember what it was but there were different institutions that were recommended for study. I know one of them is the Legal System in Canada. Theres a couple of others but I can't remember - - CBC used to be something that was studied in grade 9. CBC or the radio broadcasting part of Canada which has been a major part of Canadian culture and I think that was dropped in grade 8 in Edmonton. They studied in grade 8 at that time, that unit. But anyway that I had in my mind was the time that organized labour could be studied. If there was say, a unit available.

A. Well I think you mentioned one of your units be in with Africa but their methods of handling the workforce over there are not at all like we have here though there might be some similarities because the apartheid the labour leaders are treated over there and I think that would be an opportunity to get into how labour is perceived over there. It isn't just because its a third world its - I think probably an exagerated Canada. Its what Canada might be 10 years or 20 years from now. Because that's the way we're headed. And I think if the teacher has any kind of a labour inclination or awareness that making the students aware of labour in every particular facet of the social studies curriculum. Like, if it isn't in the curriculum and they aren't having to follow it - if you get a right wing teacher it could be devastating. I don't really have any ideas how you could control that situation. Because its almost a domino effect with respect to the students that are in school now will eventually become teachers of tomorrow and they've been indoctrinated - how the hell do you then break that cycle? University is a right wing organization. They sure as hell aren't going to teach anything about labour - not unless you take a particular labour studies course and I've never taken one and I spoke to some people have been in some of these courses and its difficult to get a favorable labour opinion out of the course.

Q. If you can find those courses existing.

A. They're difficult because its all leaning towards the top end to become management - control of the country is totally dominated by national corporations. And I believe the only reason that it has become that way is because of the political system of the election campaigns . The multi nationals are obviously going to make the most profit in this country. They have the most to gain by favorable legislation so they're going to make the heaviest contributions to election campaigns. The man that pays the piper calls the tune. It just boils down to that very simply. If elections were paid for by the public purse maybe that would be the breaking system - the system that would break it but it would probably never happen in our lifetime.

Somehow we've got to break that cycle. We've got to break that stranglehold the corporations have on us in this country.

Is there anything in the curriculum on workers in Africa?

Q. Well, I think I agree with you with your point that probably there should be some of this content in not just in terms of one bag kind of thing and they take once in twelve years and part of one year but it has to probably be all through. I think thats a good point because obviously its going to have more effect if they have to take it a little bit every year as opposed to one shot.

A. Well theres at least some of that exposure throughout each of the segments, each of the units thats being taught. Like I'd really be surpised if in the unit that deals with Africa that

there would be anything there with respect to how Apartheid puts down the worker, the black and how they are not able to join trade unions and be represented by a group rather than individual

Q. Not unless the teacher is aware enough to get some of the - there are some good films available now that show some of this and the way they're dealt with and a lot of teachers don't know that ...

A. I'd be surprised if you weren't reprimanded for delving too far off the curriculum if you wanted to get into that. You may be very well treated the same as Keegstra. That's if you didn't have it coming but you could get the same end result

Q. It makes me wonder how long I'm going to stay as a teacher too you ~~know~~ when you start getting into the situation where you've got evaluation of you and these guys constantly wandering in and out and ..

A. Well if there's one teacher in 10,000 that's what the government would call balance if you had a labour bias - a pro-labour point of view, that could be their balance to the 10,000 other teachers that have the other point of view. You may get away with it.

Q. Well, maybe we should leave it there and a few of these points we could maybe pick up on with our last one. There's a couple of things I'd like to pursue yet. You're agreeable?